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S K E T C H

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Moral Philosophy ;

O R A N

E S S A Y

To demonstrate the Principles of

V I R T U E and R E L I G I O N

U P O N

A New, Natural, and Easy PLAN.

By JOHN TAYLOR, late of NORWICH, D. D.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. WAUGH, at the Turk's-head in Lombard-
street ; and W. FENNER, at the Angel and Bible in Pater-
noster-row. M,DCC,LX.



T H E

P R E F A C E.

R E A D E R,

THE chief Design of this Treatise is to establish and explain the Principles relating to the Foundation, or primary Reason, of Virtue. And therefore, if any Propositions, or Assertions, which do not immediately relate to them, should appear to be dubious, let it be remembered, that the main Scheme may not thereby be affected; but, for all that, may stand firm upon it's own Foundation. Those Principles are here considered simply and absolutely in themselves, as the Ground, or Reason, of right Action, without attending to the Consequences of such Action, or what Good may follow from it. Just as in Euclid, the simple Principles of Geometry are demonstrated, in a Series of Propositions, without considering the Purposes to

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which they may be applied. The Principles are my own, the Result of my own Reflections; and so is the Plan. But I have freely extracted Explications and Improvements out of an excellent Book, intitled, An Enquiry concerning Virtue and Happiness, published 1751; the Work of my worthy, and much esteemed Friend, Philips Glover Esq; late of Wispington in Lincolnshire; with whom I had frequent Conversations upon this Subject for several Years; which, perhaps, may give me some Right to any Thing in that Book that may be useful in this. The same Liberty I have taken with another valuable Performance, which doth much Honor to the Author, and Service to the Cause; I mean the Reverend Mr. Price's Review, &c. published last Year,

This Piece of mine is not a System, but a Sketch; originally designed for young Students, only as an Introduction to the reading of Woolaston's Religion of Nature delineated, and now published chiefly for their Use. I wish it may prove a Hint to some abler Hand to bring it to a greater Degree of Perfection,

*Warrington
Septem. 3. 1759.*

John Taylor.

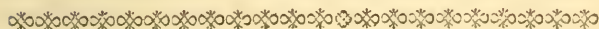


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S K E T C H

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M O R A L P H I L O S O P H Y .



The I N T R O D U C T I O N .

 O have a clear View, and solid Conviction of the Principles and Obligations of Virtue, or natural Religion, as standing upon an eternal and immutable Foundation, must give great Satisfaction, Assurance and Stability to any Mind in the Practice of all Duty. But it is of singular Importance to the Study of the sacred Writings : not only to prove, in general, the Truth of Revelation ; but also to explain the particular Doctrines therein contained. For every Dis-

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penfation and Doctrines, which is of GOD, must neceffarily be in Confistency with what He hath already discovered to us in the Natures of Things, and the certain Deductions of Reason from them. This is the principal Clue, which must guide us in our Searches into Revelation. Revelation is of no Use to us, if it is not an Address to the Understanding and common Sense of Mankind. And therefore, without a faithful Use of our own Faculties, and a proper Acquaintance with the Principles of Truth and Reason, by mistaking the Sense and Phrases of the Scriptures, we may be led to deduce from them such Doctrines as are altogether unworthy of GOD, and the Reproach of Reason and Humanity. Which, in Fact, hath been the Case. But if the Judgment is well settled in the true Principles of natural Religion, we shall be furnished with a Standard, by which to measure every Part of Revelation ; a Standard of the same Authority with Revelation it self. And it must be the strongest Confirmation of any Revelation, and give the Student the greatest Satisfaction of the Truth of its Doctrines, when he sees plainly, that they are all worthy of the Wisdom and Goodness of GOD, and perfectly consonant to all the Appearances of Nature, and to the true State of Things in our World. Thus Reason, rightly directed, will assist and guide Criticism ; and just Criticism will
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will confirm the Dictates of Reason ; and both will join their Forces in fixing the Judgment upon a solid Basis, and in giving a satisfactory and pleasing View of the Principles of Christianity.

WHEN the Principles and Laws of Virtue are drawn up into an artificial Scheme, it may look as if they were abstruse, and required great Depth of Skill to discover them. But the contrary is true. The Rule of right Action lies open to every honest Mind ; and all Men see, or may see, the Difference between moral Good and Evil, as plainly as they see with their Eyes the Difference of Objects which are before them. But though the Use of Sight is familiar to every Body, yet when it is treated of philosophically, many Things must be considered and explained by the Rules of Art, which are not obvious to every Understanding. Nothing is more common than the Use of Speech : but to resolve it in it's grammatical Principles, and to understand all it's Elegancies, is the peculiar Advantage only of the learned. In like Manner, though the Rule of right Action is plain to every Capacity, yet, when we come to shew it's Foundation, Obligations and Extent, and to explain the Faculties of the Mind, by which it is exerted and applied, we are obliged by the Laws of Art and Method, to take in many Particulars and

Arguments, which the Bulk of Mankind are not acquainted with. They, if their Hearts are but true, can perform their Duty sufficiently well, without such a nice and curious Detail of abstract Reasonings. For as all Virtue is founded in *Truth*, the Rule of Virtue must be as plain and certain as that Truth, which every Man has a Capacity and Opportunity of understanding ; beyond which his Obligations cannot extend. Nevertheless, such a methodical and accurate Disquisition is of great Use to those who have Leisure and Inclination to gain the most perfect Knowledge of the Principles of Morality.

THE primary Reason, or Foundation of Virtue, is that Principle, which being supposed, Virtue, or Action morally right, necessarily results ; which being taken away, there remains no Ground, nor Reason for Virtue.

WHICH Principle should have the following Properties.

1. IT should be so demonstrative as to lay the Mind under the same Force of Evidence as any demonstrated Proposition in *Euclid*. But observe ; Demonstration in Morality may be affected by Passion and Prejudice : and therefore, how strong and clear soever it is, may not be seen, or not assented to, through
some

some wrong Byass, or Disposition of Mind.* This is a Disadvantage, to which mathematical Demonstration is not subject. Men cannot see moral Truth in it's proper Light, unless their Minds be well tempered and disposed. It is necessary, therefore, that every Person bring to this Study a Mind disengaged from all partial and irregular Affections, and quite free and open to the Truth.

2. It should be an universal Principle, at all Times, and in all Places, to all moral Agents invariably the same. Otherwise, Virtue will be uncertain and precarious.

3. It should be perfectly consistent with Liberty, or Freedom of Choice. Otherwise it will, in it's own Nature, be destructive of Virtue or Morality; as will afterwards be shewn.

THE

* THE famous Mr. *Hobbes* took it into his Head to square the Circle, and to solve many other Problems of a difficult Nature; but being baffled and confuted in these Attempts, by many learned Men, he, in a kind of Revenge, wrote an elaborate Book to disprove the 47th Prop. of the first Book of *Euclid*. Now had that Proposition been opposite to the Prepossessions, Passions, Lusts or temporal Interests of Mankind, doubtless Mr. *Hobbes* would have had many Followers, notwithstanding the clearest Demonstration of the Truth of it. See *Harris's* Observations critical and miscellaneous. Pref. P. 6.

THE following Sketch is an Essay towards representing the Foundation of Morality in a Manner agreeable to those Properties.

C H A P. I.

Of right and wrong Actions simply considered.

D E F I N I T I O N S.

I. **T**HE Nature of any Thing is all that is contained within the Compass of it's Being ; or all that can be truly known, or affirmed of it, namely, all it's Parts, Powers, Properties, Qualities, Relations, Circumstances, whereby it is distinguished from all other Beings of a different Kind, or of different Parts, Powers, Properties, Relations and Circumstances. Or, the Nature of a Thing is it's true Definition, describing it to be what it really is. Or, it is an Idea in the Mind, apprehending a Thing to be what it truly is in it self. So the Nature of a Man, or of any Action, is the same as the true Definition, or Idea of a Man, or of any Action.

NOTE ; When I any where mention the *Natures of Things*, absolutely, I thereby mean their whole real Being ; as in the above Definition. But when I speak of the *Natures of Things*, as the Objects of human Under-

Understanding, or moral Agency, I mean the Natures of Things as they appear to, or may be known by, our limited Capacities. Which, with regard to Morality, is the same Thing, as if we understood them ever so perfectly.

II. *INTELLIGENCE, or Understanding, is that Faculty, whereby we perceive and compare the Natures of Things.*

III. *POSTULATES, or Things taken for granted.*

1. *THAT* there is a GOD, the first Cause of all Things, infinite in every natural and moral Perfection.

2. *THAT* there is a Difference between Persons, Things, Actions, Relations, Cases and Circumstances.

P R O P O S I T I O N S.

IV. *Things that are different are treated in a different Manner. Iron is treated, or used, in a different Manner from Wood, Lead from Wool, Fire from Water, &c. This is the primary Law of Action, and, in fact, the Sense and Practice of all Mankind.*

V. *DIF-*

V. *DIFFERENT Things are treated in a different Manner, because their Natures appear to us to differ.* It is of the apparent and experienced Nature of Iron to bear the Violence of Fire, and thereby to be made so soft and ductil, that it may be hammered into various Forms. But we find, that the Nature of Wood, will not bear the Violence of Fire in the same Manner. Therefore, the Carpenter and Smith work Wood and Iron in a different Way, suitably to their different Natures: the Carpenter in the Way, which suits, or fits, Wood; and the Smith in the Way, which suits Iron.

VI. *TO treat, or use, different Things, agreeably to their apparent different Natures; or, to treat Things according to what we know of their Natures, is to act rightly, or is right Action. And to do otherwise, is to act wrong, or is wrong Action; as it is acting contrary to what we know of the Natures of Things.*

VII. *THUS, the Difference of Actions results naturally from the Difference of Objects.* For if there was no Difference of Things, or Objects, there would be no Reason, or Ground, for any Difference of Actions. No Action could be either right or wrong; but, all Things being alike, all Actions would be alike;

alike ; and we might, for any Reason to the contrary, treat, use, or act towards all Things in the same Manner.

VIII. *THE Rightness of an Action*, or the right Treatment of an Object, *doth not depend upon the Will or Power of him that performs it.* Or, an Action is not therefore right, merely because the Agent chuseth, or hath it in his Power, to act as he pleaseth. But the Rightness of the Action consists in the right Treatment of the *Object*, or in treating the Object according to it's known Nature and Properties. The known Nature and Properties of the *Object* do determine and prescribe the Rightness of the Action. It is in the Power and Choice of the Workman to endeavour to work Wood in the same Manner as Iron. But it is self-evident, that his Power and Choice doth not make the Action to be right : because, independent of his Power and Will, the Nature of the Object makes it to be wrong : and, consequently, independent of the Power and Will of any other Being.

IX. *THE Rightness of an Action*, or the right Treatment of an Object, *is not affected by good or bad Consequences ;* or by the Good or Harm, which may result from it. If the Workman treats his Materials according to their true Natures, the Action is right,
[Prop.

[Prop. VI.] whether the Ship happens to be used for Piracy, or fair Trade ; or the Sword for Defence, or Murther.

X. *THE Rightness of an Action is not affected by any Loss or Gain which may accrue to the Author of it.* Loss or Gain foreseen may affect his Mind by Way of Discouragement or Motive ; but are essentially distinct from the Action it self, and follow it, or are considered as following it, after it is done, and hath received it's whole true Nature and Properties ; and therefore cannot alter it's Nature, cause it to be what it is not, or make it to be wrong, when it is in it self right. For the same Reason,

XI. *THE Rightness of an Action is not affected by the after Reflections, or Affections of the Author, or of any other Person.* Approbation, Applause, Satisfaction, Pleasure, &c. are all essentially different from the Action, and follow it after it is done, and hath received it's whole true Nature and Properties : and therefore can only shew what the Author, or others, do think of it, or how they are affected with it ; but cannot constitute it's Nature, in Whole or in Part, or give it any of it's Qualities. Or, if Approbation, Applause, &c. are previously considered, they may influence as Motives to the Action ; but cannot affect the Rightness of
it

it in it self; seeing it must be previously supposed to be done and finished, before they can be supposed to be Motives to it.

XII. *TO right Action, thus considered, or considered only with respect to the Nature and Properties of the Object, we are not obliged by any private Gain or Advantage; nor by any Compact or Agreement between Party and Party; nor by the Will, Command, or Force of any superior Power or Authority; but purely by the Nature of the Thing, antecedently to all positive Laws and Sanctions, and independently of all Will and Power whatever. Which may properly be called a natural Obligation, as it is involved in the Natures of Things, and immediately resulteth only and wholly from them, so far as we know them.**

XIII. DE-

* To say, that to treat an Object, or to do a Thing rightly, according to it's known Nature, is not obligatory *in it self*, without regard to any private Advantage, or to any Will or Power, is a manifest Contradiction. It is to say, that a Thing is what it is not; or that we are not *obliged* to do what, according to the Nature of the Thing, it is *right* to do. And suppose a Person should gain by doing a Thing *wrong*, or lose by doing it *right*, still the *Right* and *Wrong* of the Action, in it self considered, would be the same, whatever he gaineth or loseth. His Loss or Gain may affect his Purse, but doth not change the Nature of the Action. So the Authority or Power of a Superior may command or force an Inferior to do what is *wrong*; but that Command or Force

XIII. DEFINIT. By Obligation, in this Treatise, I mean, *A Reason for acting in any particular Manner, resulting from the Natures of Things, and shewing that such an Action is agreeable to them; and therefore, that it is reasonable, or fit to be done. Or, Obligation is the Reasonableness of treating Things according to their several different Natures.*

XIV. TO know the Natures of Things, is the same as to know the Obligation to right Action.

XV. COROL. I. *The primary Obligation to right Action is to gain the most exact Knowledge, we are able, of the Natures of those Things, in which we are concerned. Otherwise we cannot know whether we treat them right or wrong. Therefore,*

XVI. COROL. 2. *Our own Understanding, and the Cultivation of it, is the primary Object of right Action. Or, he that would act rightly, must begin with using his Understanding rightly.*

XVII. THE

Force doth not change the Nature of the Action, or make it to be *right*; because it is in it self, or in it's own Nature, *wrong*.

XVII. *THE* Obligation to right Action must be universally binding to all intelligent Beings, at all Times, and in all Places. For where ever, and when ever there hath been, is, or shall be Difference in the Natures of Things, every intelligent Being, so far as, in the due Exercise of it's Powers, it sees that Difference, hath been, is, and will be for ever obliged to act agreeably to it. Prop. XIV.

XVIII. FROM the Whole, it follows ; That right Action hath a real Foundation, not in the Prospect of Gain ; nor in the Will, Power, Command, Law or Authority of any Being whatever ; but in the different Natures of Things, as they are perceived by an intelligent Being. And that, the different Natures of Things being supposed, Obligation to right Action necessarily results ; being taken away, there can be no Reason or Ground for it.

C H A P. II.

Of Truth.

XIX. *THE* true Natures of Things, and the Truth do coincide, or are the same.

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BECAUSE

BECAUSE *all* the Truth, that can possibly be conceived, or spoken of Things, is contained in their Natures, and the Properties, Relations, Circumstances belonging to them. [Prop. I.] Nor is there any *Truth*, that can be known, or declared, concerning them, but what is contained in their Natures, &c. Thus the Natures, &c. of all Things do comprehend and include all the Truth that can be known in the whole Universe. This is *Truth* in the primary and most proper Sense.

TRUTH may also signify the Conformity of our Ideas to the real Natures of Things in Opposition to Error or Fiction. This is the Truth of Ideas, or their Agreement with the Truth of Objects, whether such Truth be only conceived in the Mind, or expressed in Definitions. And this Species of Truth, so far as it is conformable to the real Natures of Things, or gives true Definitions of them, coincides and comes under the same Rules with Truth in the primary and most proper Sense.

Truth is also used to signify the Conformity of our Words to the Apprehension or Sense of our Minds, in Opposition to Deceit or Lying. But it is *Truth*, in the two preceding Senses, which we are now explaining,
and

and which is principally intended in this Treatise.

XX. *TRUTH, or the true Natures of Things, exists necessarily, and therefore eternally, independently, universally and unchangeably.*

DEFIN. *Necessity is either independent of all Will and Power universally ; or independent only of some particular Will and Power : it is either absolute, or relative ; antecedent, or consequent. Necessity universally independent, absolute and antecedent is the Necessity by which God exists ; and is Necessity in the very Nature of the Thing, as it implies a Contradiction not to exist ; and is not produced by any antecedent Cause, or Agent, but exists antecedent to all Causes and Agents besides it self. Relative Necessity, or Necessity independent only on some particular Will or Power, is Necessity in some Respect only : as when I am impelled, or constrained, by a superior Power to be moved against my Will. I then am moved by a Necessity relative to my Weakness ; because I am not able to resist the superior impelling Power. Consequent Necessity is the necessary Result of Existence ; and may be applied to any contingent, or created Being in consequence of it's Existence. For when it doth exist, it must exist necessarily in this Respect, that it cannot both exist, and not exist, at the*

same Time. And by the same Necessity, it must necessarily exist in the *Manner* in which it doth exist. That is to say, with the Nature, Properties, Qualities with which, and in the Relations and Circumstances, in which, it doth exist. So that, though the great GOD may create Beings with what various Natures, Properties, &c. he pleaseth ; yet there is a Necessity, a *consequent* Necessity, that every Thing, when he hath created it, should exist, with the Nature and Properties, and in the several Relations and Circumstances, in which he hath made it to exist. And as the Nature, Properties, Relations and Circumstances of every Being do include the whole Truth, or all the Truths which can belong to that Being, or be truly affirmed of it [by Prop. XIX.] therefore I say, that the Truths belonging to such a Being are *consequently* necessary, or necessarily result from it's Nature, and cannot but be contained in it. Nor is it in the Power of any Being whatever to make it true, that those Truths do not belong to it's Nature, while that Nature continues the same. For Instance ; it is in the Will and Pleasure of GOD, whether he will, or will not, create two such Beings as a MAN and a HORSE, under their particular Natures, Properties, Relations and Circumstances. But when he has made a MAN, that Being must of Necessity be a MAN, endowed with the Nature

ture and Properties of a Man, and in the particular Relations and Circumstances in which he is produced and placed. And so, when GOD has made an HORSE, or any other Creature, all the Truths included in it's Nature, Properties, &c. or it's real Idea, must exist. For, though no created Being existeth necessarily, yet every Being, when created, is necessarily what it is.

AND, to advance a Step further ; as the Nature, *i. e.* the real Idea, or Definition of a *Man*, or of any other particular Being, always was, and always will be, what it now is ; just as much as the Nature of a *Triangle*, with all it's Properties and Proportions, always was, and always will be, what it now is, whether a Man, or Triangle ever *actually* existed or not, (as such Ideas do not depend upon any Fact, or real Existence of Things,) therefore I say, that such Ideas or Truths belonging to the Natures of a Man, Horse, Triangle, are *absolutely necessary* ; and consequently, *independent, eternal, universal, immutable*, always and every where the same. For whatever exists by *absolute Necessity*, can be affected by no Will or Power, by no Time or Place ; but must be independent, eternal, universal and unchangeable. Infinite Power, may turn a *Man* into a *Horse*, or a *Horse* into a *Man* ; a *Triangle* into a *Circle*, or a *Circle* into a *Triangle*. But

no Power, in any Part of the Universe, from all Eternity even to all Eternity, could, or can ever change or turn the Idea, or Truths belonging to a *Man*, or to a *Triangle* into the Idea, or Truths belonging to a *Horse*, or a *Circle*. These must remain for ever and immutably the same. For though *Beings* are mutable, as to their *actual* Natures, yet the *Truths* belonging to their Natures, (or their *ideal* Natures,) are not mutable. Seeing the Idea, or Definition of a *Horse*, as such, can never become the Idea, or Definition of a *Man*, as such, or of any other Thing or Being. Thus Truth, even all Truth, which relates to all actual and possible Beings, exists by an *antecedent*, or *absolute* Necessity. For as it is true, that there never was a Time when, nor Place where, the great God was any other than what he is now ; so it is true, that there never was a Time when, nor Place where, the Idea of a Triangle or a Man was any other than what it is now.

It is also true, That the *Relations*, or Respect, which Things bear to one another, are, in their Natures, or Ideas, in the same Manner, necessary, eternal, and unalterable. For the Idea of a *Creator*, always did, and always necessarily must have respect to the Idea of a *Creature* ; and *vice versâ*. The Idea of a *Father* always was, and must necessarily be always, connected with the Idea
of

of a *Son* or *Daughter* : and *vice versâ*.——
Circumstances are only the *Relations* of a Being to it's Situation, to the Things that are about it, or to the Objects of it's Perception.——
Proportion too is but the *Relations* of higher or lower, stronger or weaker, more or less, as to Degrees of Being, Powers, Senses, Capacities, or Faculties : and therefore, both these must come under the same Rule with *Relations* in general.

XXI. COROL. Hence it follows ; that the Natures, *i. e.* the Ideas or Definitions, and Relations of all Things whatsoever, or the Truths belonging to them, are as necessary, independent, universal and immutable, as the Ideas, Definitions and Relations, or Proportions of Lines and Figures in Geometry. For if there is a real Difference between the true Nature, or the true Definition or Idea, of a Man, and of a Horse, or of any other Thing, that Difference was always, and always will be the same. Because the Idea, or true Definition of a Man, and of a Horse, or of any other Thing, or the Truths belonging to them, never could, nor ever can be any other than what they are now, at this Time. Therefore, their Difference, together with the Properties, Relations, Proportions, Circumstances, which necessarily attend, or result from that Difference, must always be the same, as really and truly as

the Difference, and different Properties, Relations and Proportions, of a Circle and Triangle, or any other geometrical Figure.

XXII. *ALL the Obligations that result, or flow from, the Truth, or the true Natures of Things, are necessary, and therefore independent, eternal, universal, and immutable.*

THAT Obligation to right Action immediately results from the Truth, or the true Natures, &c. of Things, hath been established by Prop. VII, XII. And that the Truth, or the true Natures of Things, do exist *necessarily*, &c. hath been proved under the preceding Proposition. Hence it follows; That whatever immediately results from a *necessary* Existence, as such, must result *necessarily*, or be *necessary*. But Obligation to right Action immediately results, or follows from a *necessary* Existence, as such, namely, the Truth, &c. therefore, such Obligation must result *necessarily*, or be *necessary*. It results necessarily, because it is no other than the necessary Existence of it self, or the true Idea of it, considered as what it is, with Respect to the Usage or Treatment of the Object to which it belongs. Prop. XIV. And therefore, because it is what it is, and the Idea of it cannot be changed, we are, *by the Nature of the Thing*, necessarily obliged to use and treat the Object according to what

what it is. Not, that an Obligation of *Constraint* is laid upon the Mind in Fact, or actually, to treat it according to what it is, so, as that the Mind cannot possibly do otherwise. The Mind of an intelligent Being may be supposed to act in what Manner it pleaseth. But it is an Obligation of *right Direction*, or of a true, infallible Rule, that is laid before the Mind ; which Rule is the Nature of the Thing, or the Truth belonging to it, necessarily requiring, that it be treated according to that Nature, or Truth, and not otherwise : and demonstrating, that if is treated in a Manner different from it's Nature, it is treated wrong. [Prop. VI.] The Nature of the Thing stands before the Mind as necessary, or as what it is. And in that necessary Nature the Obligation lies ; and therefore necessarily rises or results from it, as it determines and shews the only true and right Manner in which it is to be treated, whether the Mind attends to it, or not ; or treats it agreeably to it's Nature, or not. From the Idea or Nature of Man an Obligation necessarily results, or stands before the Mind, to consider and treat him as what he is, or as a Man ; and shews, that there is no other Way of treating him rightly. From the Idea or Nature of a Triangle arises an Obligation to consider and apply it in Mathematics, or in Works of Art, according to it's true Nature : otherwise, it will be
wrong

wrong considered, or applied, by the same Proposition. And this Obligation is universal and eternal, by Prop. XVII. Nor doth it depend upon any Gain or Advantage, upon any Compact or Agreement; upon any Will, Command or Force of any superior Power or Authority; but is necessary and independent. [Prop. XII.]

XXIII. COROL. I. *The Obligations of Truth do not depend upon the arbitrary Will of GOD.* Prop. XII.

XXIV. COROL. II. *The great GOD himself is necessarily under the Obligations of Truth.*

GOD is necessarily what he is, as to his *actual* as well as *ideal* Existence, and he necessarily knows this. And he as necessarily knows all the Natures, Capacities, Relations and Circumstances of all Things, which he hath produced, because he hath produced them. Nor can he possibly conceive, or consider them to be any other, or in any Respect otherwise, than what, and as what he has made them. And therefore, the same Obligations must necessarily result from their Natures, Capacities, &c. to treat them, or to deal with them, according to their respective Natures, &c. as result to any other intelligent Being. For if those Obligations re-

sult

sult *necessarily*, [Prop. XXII.] they must result *universally*, to one intelligent Nature as well as to another. For though the Extent or Degree of the Knowledge of the Natures, &c. of the Beings that exist, must be according to the Extent or Degree of Intelligence, with which any Being is endowed; yet the resulting of those Obligations necessarily from the Natures of Things hath no Connection with, nor Dependence upon, any Perception or Knowledge of any Being whatever: but is connected with, and depends upon, *only* the Natures, &c. from which such Obligations result. And therefore, those Obligations must result equally to all Minds that consider, or are acquainted with them; as their Existence neither is, nor can be affected (altered or changed) by any Mind, that considers and observes them, seeing they have no Dependence on any Mind whatsoever; but result necessarily from the Natures of Things. The great God may create what Beings he thinks fit. But when he hath created any Beings, the Natures, &c. of those Beings must be what they are, independently even of his Will, and only with Respect to their own Existence and Situation, what and where they are. And as He, who made all Things, must have the most perfect and extensive Knowledge of all Natures, &c. and can never have any possible Reason, or Inducement, to act contrary to them, it is infallibly certain, that

that he always will actually treat and deal with them according to their true Natures, Properties, Relations or Circumstances ; or according to what they really are : unless he will contradict, or act inconsistently with, his own certain Knowledge, or violate a known Obligation, and so be self-condemned ; which is absurd. Therefore, the Divine Being, though he hath no Superior to direct him, and though his Happiness can neither be increased, nor diminished, must be as necessarily obliged to observe Truth and Reason in all his Actions, as any other intelligent Nature : and that, as much more perfectly and strongly, as he doth more perfectly perceive those eternal and necessary Obligations. And his Divine Rectitude, or Perfection of Holiness, consists in his constant and invariable Conformity to this eternal and immutable Rule of all right Action. Which indeed is no other than his own infinite, eternal and all-perfect Understanding ; which Understanding is the eternal and unchangeable Law, or Rule by which He is directed in all his Actions.

FROM these Propositions we may deduce the following Axioms, Canons or Laws of Truth.

XXV. CANON I. [That which is, is] *is the universal Rule of all Truth : as on the contrary,*

contrary, [that is, which is not ;] or [that is not, which is,] are the universal Rules of all Error. That is to say, all Truth and Error may be reduced to those Rules.

XXVI. CANON 2. *All Truth exists independently of all Will and Power whatsoever.*
Prop. XX.

XXVII. CANON 3. *No Truth, though of the least Importance, can ever be changed or destroyed.* All created Beings may be changed or destroyed ; but the Truths belonging to their several Natures can never, by any Power whatever, be destroyed or changed. [Prop. XX.] For as the least Drop of Water, or the smallest Atom of Dust, must necessarily, while it continues in Being, fill up some Space, and Mountains heaped upon Mountains cannot crush it into Nothing : so the least Truth is of Force to resist the united Power of the whole Universe ; nor can the joint Endeavours of all Beings make it not to be true. Hence, whatever Action we commit at any Time, it must be eternally true, that we have done that Action. It is as true now, that the Wickedness committed 4000 Years ago, was then committed, as it was the very Day it was done ; and must remain equally true to all Eternity. Truth may be denied, or forgotten ; but can never be destroyed.

XXVIII.

XXVIII. CANON 4. *Truth, as it can never be changed or destroyed, may equally operate in the Mind that is conscious to it, with the same unvaried Force, and have equal Effects upon such a Mind, to all Eternity.*

XXIX. CANON 5. *No one Truth can possibly be inconsistent with any other Truth. If one Thing be true, it may indeed follow, that another is false : but if one Thing be true, it can never follow, that another true Thing is false ; because the one is as true as the other, both being founded in the real Nature or Existence of Things.*

XXX. CANON 6. *Whatever is inconsistent with, or contradictory to, Truth, is Falshood or Error.*

XXXI. CANON 7. *A Thing cannot be true and false, at the same Time, and in the same Respect.*

XXXII. CANON 8. *There are no Degrees of Truth, simply considered ; all Truth being equally true, though not equally important. The Truths belonging to the Deity are infinitely more important than the Truths belonging to any Portion of mere Matter. Nevertheless, the Truths belonging to both are equally true.*

XXXIII.

XXXIII. CANON 9. *There is no Medium between Truth and Falshood ; as there is no Medium between Existence and Non-Existence.*

XXXIV. CANON 10. *No one Intelligence can understand that to be true, without Error, which another Intelligence understands to be false, without Error. Or, All Truth must be understood to be Truth by all intelligent Beings, so far as they do understand it.*

XXXV. CANON 11. *All Understanding must necessarily be subject to Truth. Or, the true Natures and Existences of Things are the Rule and Measure of all Understanding, from which no Understanding can deviate without falling into Error, or Ignorance. And, understanding any Thing to be true, it is not in the Power of any intelligent Being to understand it to be false, or otherwise than as true.*

XXXVI. CANON 12. *No Truth whatsoever can be subject to any Understanding, or Authority whatsoever. Or, It is not in the Power of any Understanding or Authority to make what it pleases to be true. Truth cannot be determined, decreed, or established by the Pleasure, Numbers, or Authority of any Men, or of any other Beings: but is determined*

terminated and established by it's own necessary Existence alone.

XXXVII. CANON 13. *As the great GOD perfectly understands all Manner of Existences, both actual and possible, his Understanding must be a Rule and Measure of Truth, no less perfect than the real Natures of Things, to which it is fully commensurate.*

C H A P. III.

Of Reason.

XXXVIII. DEFIN. **R**EASON is that Faculty of the Mind, by which we perceive, or understand the Truth, or the true Natures of Things, and are capable of considering, distinguishing, comparing and judging of their Natures, Properties, Circumstances and Relations, and of discovering what is agreeable to, or inconsistent with them. Thus Reason is distinguished from the simple Perceptions of Sense, or the Feelings of mere animal Nature, such as Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting. Which indeed may generally perceive, or feel, Objects truly; but cannot perceive or apprehend the Truth, or reflect upon their own Feelings, so as to deduce any Truths from the Natures, or Relations of Objects; which is the Work, not
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of *Sense*, but of *Reason* alone. *Sense* only sees a Part, and a Whole : *Reason* compares them, and discovers, that the Whole is equal to all it's Parts. *Sense* only hears Sounds : *Reason* distinguishes, compares and compounds them. Thus *Reason* is also distinguished from *Instincts* ; which, according to their true Nature, are to be considered as the mechanical Part of our Constitution ; seeing they have the same Effect upon the Motions of an Animal, as Weights and Springs upon a Machine, as a Clock, &c. moving, impelling, exciting or determining the Animal involuntarily, or without Thought or Reflection. Some Animals seem to be wholly under the Influence of such mechanical Powers, or Impressions. However such Instincts we certainly experience in the Inclinations, Passions, Affections, Desires and Appetites, which were originally implanted in our Constitution, and which are perpetually working in it : such as Fear, Anger, Love, Hatred, Pity, Affection to Offspring, an Inclination to Society, Benevolence or good Nature, Hunger, Thirst, &c. These Instincts are, in themselves, manifestly the interior Part of our Constitution, and have no Connection with Reason, or Understanding ; saving only so far as they are rightly directed, or governed by it.

NOTE ; In this Definition of REASON I include both the Faculty, and the Application of it ; the Capacity of perceiving, and the actual Perception of Truth. I also use Reason and Understanding as synonymous.

XXXIX. REASON is that Principle, in all Beings endowed with it, which is in it's own Nature supreme and commanding ; before which all Means and Ends, that any Mind is capable of regarding, are to be tried as reasonable or unreasonable ; and accordingly to be pursued or avoided. In Deity, Understanding or Reason is the Principle, which makes all his natural Attributes to be Perfections. For, without Reason, his Being would be reduced to the State of thoughtless Matter, or to an infinite Absurdity. His Immenfity would be but as mere Extension, and his Power a boundless Force without Direction. And, without Understanding and Reason, his moral Perfections could have no Existence at all. For it is manifest, that a Being without Reason is altogether incapable of Justice, Goodness, Truth or Holiness ; or of fo much as knowing what they are, or what the proper Objects, upon which they are to be exercifed. In fhort, without Reason, the Divine Nature would be a kind of univerfal Darknefs, and whatever he is neceffarily, would be neceffarily incapable of being

being applied to any proper End. And in human Life, Reason is most evidently the reigning Principle, which alone is capable of ordering and directing all Affairs. And in our Constitution, it is superior to, and capable of controuling and regulating, all our Passions, Affections and Appetites.

XL. REASON in any Being necessarily implies an Obligation upon that Being to right Action. For Obligation to right Action arises necessarily from the Natures and Relations of Things, so far as they are known, by Prop. XII; XIV. Therefore, where there is the most perfect Knowledge of the Natures and Relations of all Beings, as in the most high God, there the most perfect and strongest Obligations must necessarily result. And with Regard to all other Beings, the nearer they approach, in the Scale of Being, to the Perfection of Reason, the more perfect and extensive their Obligations to right Action must be. And the lowest Class of rational Nature, so far as it is capable of knowing the Truth, must so far necessarily be under an Obligation to follow it.

XLI. WHEN we answer this Obligation, and act agreeably to the Truth, or the true Natures, Properties, Relations and Circumstances of Things, we then act REASONABLY; or our Actions and Pursuits are
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reasonable.

reasonable. Reason discovers, or perceives the Truth ; and we act reasonably, in any Respect, when we act agreeably to what Reason discovers concerning the Natures, Properties, Relations, and Circumstances of Things.

XLII. *THE Faculty of Reason may be more or less perfect in different Beings.* The Difference of mental Capacities is certain. In God, Reason must necessarily be in the highest Degree of Perfection. In all other Beings, it is in that Degree and Extent, which He is pleased to allot. And among Men we find, that he has allotted very different Capacities to different Persons.

XLIII. *BUT Understanding or Reason in different Beings, is not different with Respect to what it truly understands ; but only in Degree or Extent of Capacity,* by Prop. XXXIV. For Instance ; suppose any rational Being can only understand the Relation between two and four, or that four is double to two ; though it should understand no other Relation or Proportion ; yet it understands this, as truly as that Being, whose rational Capacity is of a higher Degree, or much larger Extent. And thus it's Understanding is inferior, only as it is less extensive, not as it understands differently, what it doth understand, from a superior Capacity.

XLIV.

XLIV. *THE Obligations of rational Beings to right Action must be according to their several Degrees of Reason, and the Extent of their intellectual Capacities.* For it is very evident, that as no Being can act, so no Being can be obliged to act, beyond the Limits of it's natural Powers.

C H A P. IV.

Of Agency.

XLV. DEFIN. *AGENCY* is Liberty of MIND to prefer one Thing before another, to will or nill, to choose to exert to any Power, or not to exert it. He who hath a Capacity of choosing to rise up, or to sit still; to speak, or to be silent; to turn his Thoughts to this, or to the other Object, is indued with Agency.

XLVI. *FREEDOM* and Agency are the same Thing. He that hath Freedom of Mind to choose and will, to nill or refuse, is an Agent. But he that hath not that Freedom is no Agent. To will and to act are the same Thing: and to ask, if a Man be free, is the same as to ask, if he be an Agent.

XLVII. *THE Existence of any Being, separate and distinct from the first necessarily existing*

existing Cause, is sufficient Evidence of the Agency of the first Cause, or supreme Being. For if any other Being doth exist, it must either exist necessarily, or by the Will, or Agency, of the first Cause. There is no third Reason or Ground of Existence. It is absurd, or rather impossible, that I should think myself a necessarily existing Being, or any Part of such a Being : because I know certainly that I have not the Attributes, which necessarily belong to such a Being : I must therefore either be produced by the Will, or Agency, of such a Being, or be necessarily produced. If the latter, then I exist necessarily ; seeing that which is necessarily produced, must exist by the same Necessity, by which it's Cause doth exist, and must have the Attributes of a necessarily existing Being. But I am sure I have not those Attributes : therefore, I am the free Production of the first Cause, who had it in his Option to give me Existence or not. This shews, that Agency, or Freedom of Choice, is not impossible, or a Contradiction ; seeing the whole Creation proves, that God, who produced it, produced it voluntarily ; and consequently is an *Agent*.

XLVIII. *Man is an Agent.* If Man was free, he could not have greater Consciousness, or Evidence, of his Freedom than he hath. Any one Instance of Self-Motion in

us will prove us to be Agents. And any one may give himself at any Time a Demonstration of this, by only stirring his Finger, or shutting his Eyes whenever he pleaseth. It is unreasonable and absurd to suppose, that God hath given us Understanding and Judgment without a Power of using them. Or that we should be capable of knowing and reasoning about right Action, and yet not be capable of acting. Our being necessarily justified, or condemned by the Reflections of our Minds upon our own Actions, proves that *we* are accountable for them, as being the proper and only Authors of them ; and, consequently, that we are *Agents*.

XLIX. *AGENCY, or Freedom of Mind, is the same in nilling as in willing ; in refusing, as in consenting ; or in choosing not to do a Thing, as in choosing to do it.* If at present I do not like to do a Thing, and so refuse to do it ; but afterwards alter my Mind, and then am willing to do it, or choose it should be done : the Freedom of the Mind is equally exerted in refusing to do the Thing, in altering my Mind, and in choosing to do it.

L. *AGENCY, or a Capacity of willing or choosing that any Effect should be produced, and Power, or an Ability to produce that Effect, are different Things, and may exist the*

one without the other. The Power of GOD is infinite, and perfectly commensurate to his Agency : insomuch that whatever he wills, is immediately effected. But human Power is confined to very narrow Bounds, and capable of producing, comparatively, but very few Effects : so that it is easy to conceive, that we may will, or choose, to have that done, which is not in our *Power* to effect ; or, that we may will to rest, or not to move, even when a superior Power constrains us to be moved. Further ; any Action is justly attributed to the Agent, who willed it to be effected, though the Effect did not follow, through Defect of his Power ; or though the Power of another Agent effected it, in Consequence of his willing it. He is a Murderer, who wills the Murther, though he employs a Russian to perpetrate what he willeth. Power may possibly reside in a Subject that is no Agent : as in the Case of physical or natural Powers ; such as Springs, Weights, or the Power of a Body in Motion to impel or move another Body. And Agency may possibly be in a Subject that hath no Power to produce the external Effect ; as in a Man who hath no Use of his Limbs, and yet wills, or desires to walk. For it is very plain ; that Agency, which is the voluntary Exertion of the *Mind*, is not destroyed by any Obstruction of the Effect. Therefore,

LI. WANT

LI. *WANT of Power doth not destroy Agency.* Indeed, the Consciousness that I want Power to effect a Thing, may prevent my willing of it ; but takes not away my Agency, or Capacity of willing it. And my not acting, or willing, in such a Case, only shews my Prudence, not Want of Agency. Though the Body be bound in Fetters, or confined to the closest Prison, the Mind is still free, and can, notwithstanding, exert it self voluntarily. And so in all Cases where the Power of effecting, or moving, is wanting, or is obstructed by a superior Power.

LII. *THE Decision of the Judgment for or against a Thing doth not affect or destroy, Freedom, or Agency.* The Judgment simply shews, what is, or appears to be, right and wrong ; and though Men should generally be determined to act according to it's Decision ; yet it is certain, from undoubted *Experience* and Facts, which in this Case are as good Evidence, as *Experiments* in natural Philosophy, that they are not determined necessarily, but freely. Not *necessarily*, by a *relative, particular* Necessity ; [See the Definition under Prop. XX.] for then they must *always* follow the Decision of the Judgment by the Constraint of a Force which they are not able to resist. Which is contrary to *Experience* and Fact. Men too frequently choose
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to act contrary to the Decision of the Judgment concerning Right and Wrong. They see and acknowledge the Right, and do the Wrong. Otherwise, Men would always, and universally do what is morally right, as they would always follow the Dictates of their Judgments ; as will be seen afterwards.

LIII. *FOR the same Reason, Motives of Pleasure, or Pain, Profit, or Loss, do not affect Agency.* These work powerfully upon the human Mind, but not necessarily ; seeing there are many who choose to act contrary to their Influence. They are abstract Notions, or Considerations, in the Mind, which therefore, may induce, or incline, but have no Power to compel or force. They are not *Agents*, or *efficient Causes*, but an *End* proposed, or in View : and therefore, can influence the Mind only as Objects or Ends proposed to it's Consideration. The Prospect or Consideration, of some very great Evil, Pain or Suffering, which makes it, as we say, *morally* certain, that I shall not choose to do what would bring upon me the dreaded Evil, doth not suspend, much less destroy, my Freedom, or Agency. In such Cases, my not choosing, or refusing, shews only my Care or Caution to preserve my Life, Ease or Safety : or my Fear of Pain and Death ; but not my Want of Liberty. For though it be certain, that I shall not choose to do what would bring upon me the supposed

supposed Evil, yet am I still at Liberty to choose it, did I not prefer the Preservation of my Life and Safety. My Freedom of Judgment and Choice remains entire : for if I judged it proper, or had Reasons, which determined me to choose or prefer the contrary, I should, at that very Instant, choose the contrary. No Man would choose to have his Flesh burnt with a hot Iron without any Reason, or when he hath a very good Reason against it : but when there is a good Reason for it, to preserve Life or Limb, he will choose that the Surgeon should apply a Cautery, or hot Iron, to his Flesh. No Man would choose to be burnt alive : but rather than do Violence to Religion or Conscience, many have gone to the Stake with surprizing Courage and Firmness of Mind. No Man would willingly incur the Danger of losing his Life : but in his Country's Cause, and for other Reasons, which have appeared to him very important, good and just, many a Man hath voluntarily exposed his Life to this Danger. We choose Evil, when of two Evils we choose the least. This plainly proves, that in such Cases a Man chooseth or refuseth, nilleth or willeth, not because his Liberty is affected ; but because he hath, or hath not, Reasons or Motives to determine him this or the other Way. His Agency is the same both in refusing and in choosing, by Prop. XLIX.

LIV. *AGENCY*, or *Freedom*, admits not of *Degrees*; or cannot be more or less, partly free, and partly forced. For though a Being may both act, and be acted upon; yet this cannot be in the same Respects. For so far as any Being acteth, he is perfectly free: so far as he is acted upon, he is no Agent at all. For,

LV. *AN irresistible Impulse upon the Mind from some superior Power, which forces us to will, or to consent, destroys Agency: or rather is a Contradiction.* It is impossible, that the Will, or free Choice, should be forced. And if it be forced, it cannot, for that Reason, be free. For Force necessarily makes the Thing, supposed to be freely willed, not to be at all willed, or chosen, by the Being, who is under the Constraint of such Force. Therefore, in the Nature of the Thing, the Will cannot be subject to any overbearing Violence. For by such Violence it must cease to be a Will, or an Agent; and becomes as passive as inert Matter, when it is put into Motion by mere Power. Nor can any Thing, effected in the Mind by mere Force, be accounted the Action of the Being, in whom it is effected, any more than the Motion of any Body can be accounted the Action, or freely chosen Motion, of that Body.

LVI. *THE*

LVI. *THE proper Cause of an Action is the Will of the Agent, and nothing else.* If any Effect is produced by any external Force impressed upon my Mind or Body, that Effect is not my Action, but the Action of that Being, who willed, or chose, to force me, not indeed to *act*, but to be *moved* in such a Manner as to produce the supposed Effect : for which I can in no Sense be accountable, as I was only a passive Instrument in the Hand of a superior Agent. That Effect being truly and only my Action, which I freely will to exist. Therefore, .

LVII. *ONLY what an Agent intends to do is to be accounted his Action.* What arises beyond or contrary to his Intention, however it may eventually happen, or be derived by the Connection of natural Causes, from his Determination, ought not to be imputed to him. Our own Determinations alone are our Actions. [LV. LVI.] These alone we have absolute Power over, and are immediately and truly the Causes of, and responsible for. [Price.] A Person intending to fell a Tree, may accidentally, by the Head's flying from the Helve of the Ax, kill a Man : but this, not being his Intention, is not his Action.

C H A P. V.

Of Virtue, or Action morally right.

LVIII. **M**ORAL Action comprehends all Instances of Regard or Behaviour towards our selves, and all other rational, and sensible, or mere animal Beings, from the most high GOD down to the meanest Reptil, to which we are related, with which we have any Society, or Intercourse, or which we can any Ways voluntarily affect by our Actions. These are the Limits of Morality, with Regard to Objects and Actions. Therefore,

LIX. FROM the Objects and Ideas of Morality we exclude all Things merely material or inanimate, with their Natures and Properties, as Wood, Stone, Iron, Water, Air, &c. and any mechanical Operations, or Actions upon, or relating to them; such as Painting, Sculpture, Building, Musick, &c. excepting only so far as such inanimate Things, or such Operations have any Connection with our Regards to, or Treatment of rational or sensible Beings. Such Operations may be simply right or wrong according to the Natures, or Properties of the Things: that is to say, may be painted, carved, performed, &c. truly or agreeably to the true Nature of Things; but they are
not

not *morally* right or wrong, any further than they are, or are not, done *honestly, usefully or beneficently*.

LX. *WE must also exclude from the Idea of Morality all mere Knowledge, or Science ; as Mathematics, History, Skill in Languages, &c. As also all Ingenuity, or Sagacity of Mind, Strength, or Agility of Body.* All these may, in some Respects, bear a Conformity to Truth, or to the true Natures of Things. But being only simple Knowledge, or Powers, they cannot be *morally* right or wrong, any further than as they are applied ; or are, or are not used *honestly, usefully, or beneficently*. Any Skill, Capacity, Ingenuity or Sagacity in Arts and Sciences may exist, and act with great Truth and Accuracy in Respect to their particular Objects and Ends, without connoting or influencing right Behaviour, or any good Disposition of Mind ; and are consistent with the most vicious and immoral Lives.

LXI. *AND we may exclude from the Idea of Morality the Performance of any Functions merely natural or animal ; as eating, drinking, sleeping, &c. excepting so far as Reason, or Behaviour, are concerned in the Performance of them.* For though the performing such Functions may be acting according to the true Natures of Things, yet
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in themselves they are mere *natural* Actions, to which, in Part at least, we are compelled by Necessity of Nature. And so far they cannot be judged Actions at all. [XLV, XLVI.]

LXII. *ALSO all instinctive Inclinations, Passions and Affections, such as Fear, Sorrow, Joy, Compassion, Love, &c. must be excluded from the Notion and Principle of moral Action.* Seeing these are, as it were, the Mechanism of our Frame, which move, impel, excite or determine the animal Part of our Constitution involuntarily, or without Thought or Reflection ; and so far their Motions are no Actions at all ; nor, while we are under their Impulse alone, are we Agents, by Prop. XLV, XLVI. Consequently, Instincts can constitute no Part or Principle of Morality, any further than they are overruled, restrained, directed and applied by the Interposition of Reason to moral Purposes.

LXIII. As all the foregoing Rules and Laws of *right Action simply considered, of Truth, of Reason and of Agency*, are universally true ; so they must necessarily be true of *Action morally right* in particular : and we have, accordingly, a Right to argue from them ; or to refer to them, as Truths already established.

LXIV. *IF*

LXIV. *IF there was no Difference in the Natures, Relations, and Properties of Persons, Things and Actions ; but all Persons, Things and Actions, and their several Natures, Relations and Properties were the same, in all Respects equal and alike, then there could be no Reason, nor Foundation, for moral Action, by Prop. VII. Because it must then be perfectly indifferent how we behave ; nor could we be under any Obligation to act in this, or in the other Manner ; seeing there would be nothing in any Object, which required any Difference in our Actions, or Behaviour, all Objects being in all Respects the same ; a Man, a Horse, a Tree, a Stone, Money in the Purse, or Pebbles on the Sea-shore ; Blood in the Veins, or Sludge in a Gutter. Nor would there be any Thing in any Action, which could make any Difference between it, and it's Opposite. Love, Hatred ; Gratitude, Ingratitude ; Intemperance, Sobriety ; Lewdness, Chastity ; stabbing a Man, and running a Spade into a Heap of Clay, would be Actions and Habits all alike, and all alike indifferent, neither morally right, nor morally wrong.*

LXV. *BUT there is a real Difference in the Natures, Properties and Relations of Persons, Things and Actions, which, in some Measure, is obvious to all Mankind, and*

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known

known and allowed over all the World. Prop. IV. V. And this Difference in the Natures, &c. of Persons, Things and Actions, (being in it self necessary and eternal, by Prop. XX.) necessarily lays us under an Obligation to act and behave differently towards them ; or to consider and treat them severally, according to their Natures, by Prop. XXII. or according to Truth, by Prop. XII. XIX. whether Men choose to consider them in this Manner or not. Prop. VIII.

LXVI. *FAITHFULLY to treat, or behave towards, all rational and sensible Beings, and the Things which may affect them, according to their Natures, Properties, Relations, and Circumstances, or according to the Truth, * so far as known, or apprehended by any*

* *TO act according to Truth*, is a right Definition of Virtue. But some have attempted to overthrow this Definition by alleging, “ That as many Truths, or true
 “ Propositions, may be affirmed of an Action morally
 “ wrong, as of an Action morally right : consequent-
 “ ly, that an Action morally wrong, may, by this Rule,
 “ be as conformable to Truth, as an Action morally
 “ right. For Instance ; it may be truly said of a vir-
 “ tuous Action, *that it exists, or is done ; that it is*
 “ *done rightly ; that it is conformable to a proper Rule ;*
 “ *that it is beneficial, praise-worthy, &c.* And it may
 “ also, on the other Hand, be as truly said of a vicious
 “ Action ; *that it exists, or is done ; that it is wrong*
 “ *done ; that it is not conformable to a proper Rule ; that*
 “ *it is mischievous, blameable, &c.* Seeing, therefore,
 “ as many Truths, or true Propositions, lie on the Side
 “ of

any particular Agent, is Virtue, or Action morally right, Prop. VI. and to act in a contrary Manner is Vice, or Action morally evil.

A Man, who considers himself as what he is in himself, a rational Being, attended with various Passions, Appetites, Imperfections and Wants ; and acts agreeably to his Nature and Circumstances, by improving and using his Mind and Reason for the right Direction of his Behaviour ; who manages and restrains his Passions and Appetites, and turns

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“ of Vice, as on the Side of Virtue, it is not only
 “ false, but ridiculous, to make a *Conformity to Truth*
 “ the Rule of moral Action.”

ANSWER. It is granted, that such Truths may be affirmed of a vicious, as well as of a virtuous Action. But then such Truths have relation only to the ACTION ; and to the Action, after it is done and past : but have no Relation to the OBJECT, or the Natures, &c. of Things, which are prior to the Action, and are the Rule according to which it was, or should have been, done. Now, when it is said, that *Virtue is acting conformably to Truth*, the Meaning is not, that it is acting in Conformity to any Truth, that may be affirmed of the *Action* considered as already done, or acted ; for that would be very absurd and ridiculous : but the Meaning is, that the Action is, or should be done, in Conformity to the Nature, Properties and Relations of the OBJECT of Action. Which *Object*, with all the Truths belonging to it, existed before the Action was done, and was the Rule by which it should be done. In short ; the TRUTH in the above Definition of *Virtue* hath Relation, not to the Truths belonging to the ACTION ; but to the Truths belonging to the OBJECT ; by which Truths in the Object, the Action is regulated while it is doing.

and applies them to their proper Ends and Purposes ; who guards against his own Weaknesses and Imperfections ; and is duely careful, in a just and reasonable Way, to supply his Wants, and provide for his own Subsistence. The Man, who acquaints himself with the Relations in which he stands to GOD, his Maker, from whom he has received his All, and upon whom he hath an entire Dependence ; and accordingly renders unto him sincere Gratitude, Trust and Obedience. The Man who attends to the several Relations, in which he stands to the Whole, or to any Part of Mankind, as a Man, a Magistrate, a Subject, a Father, a Son, a Brother, a Husband, a Master, a Servant, &c. and acts agreeably to the Truths belonging to each Relation, in Justice, Goodness, Fidelity. The Man, who considers the Sufferings and Sorrows, the Ignorance, Errors, Failings and Temptations to which Men are subject, and treateth them with Tenderness and Compassion, Assistance, Patience and Forgiveness. Who regards any Part of the brute Creation, according to it's true Nature, as sensible of Pleasure and Pain ; as subservient to his Life and Interests, and treats it accordingly, with reasonable Usage, giving it no designed or unnecessary Pain, supplying it's Wants, and reasonably gratifying it's Appetites and Senses. Lastly, who of material Things waists and abuses nothing,
that

that may be subservient to human Life : Such a one is a virtuous Person.

LXVII. COROL. 1. *The primary Foundation and Reason of Virtue lies not in the Powers of our Minds, but in Objects.* For it is most evident, that if there were no Objects of right Behaviour, whatever Faculties we are endowed with, there could be no Virtue ; as there would be nothing to exercise those Faculties upon, Prop. VII. This is common to moral Philosophy with all other Arts and Sciences ; whose Ground and Foundation lies in the Objects upon which they are exercised. Without Sounds, or Difference of Sounds, there could be no Music. Without Numbers, Dimensions, Lines or Figures, there could be no Mathematics.

LXVIII. COROL. 2. *That Virtue and it's Obligations, being founded in Truth, or the Nature of Things, stand upon a necessary, eternal and immutable Foundation, not to be changed by any Will, Power, Authority, Time or Place ; but exist, and must for ever exist independent of all these, by Prop. XX, XXII.*

LXIX. *ALL rational Beings, without Exception, are necessarily and unavoidably subject to the Obligations of Virtue.* For as those Obligations do exist necessarily, they must be uniformly the same, wherever there is

Understanding ; or any Beings, Relations, Properties, Circumstances, which belong to, or infer, any Temper of Mind, or Behavior in Actions. God therefore, who is infinite in Knowledge and Power cannot but be obliged, in all his Actions, to act agreeably to the *real* Natures, Relations and Circumstances of *all* Things ; of Himself, and of all other Beings, without Exception. That is to say, He cannot but see in all Cases, and with Regard to all Beings, what is true, or what is right and fit to be done ; and so, is obliged by the Rule of His own infinite, eternal and all-perfect Understanding, to do what is right ; nor can He be obliged by any Thing else. Nor is it possible He should, in any Case or Degree whatever, not comply with such His Obligations. For there can be no possible Hindrance to His Judgment or Actions in the least Degree. The perfect Wisdom and Power of God, together with His Self-sufficiency, must render all His Actions, moral as well as natural, absolutely complete. For there can be no possible Reason why He should ever do that which is unreasonable, or not do that which is reasonable ; seeing He necessarily knows what is reasonable, and has all Power absolutely in His own Hands, directed by infinitely perfect Knowledge and Wisdom. He cannot possibly want, or desire any Thing for Himself ; and therefore can never possibly have
any

any Inducement to Action, but the *Reason of Action*. And, as it is impossible that Reason should be both for and against any Action, it follows, that GOD will always do what is right and reasonable : not because He has not the *natural* Power to do otherwise ; but because He can have no Motive to it, but will always choose to act reasonably : hence arise those Perfections in GOD, which are called *moral* ; such as *Justice, Goodness, Faithfulness, Truth*, and the like ; which may be comprized under the Name and Notion of *Divine Rectitude*, meaning, that Constancy and Certainty, with which GOD doth invariably act according to Truth and the Reason of Things ; which is the sole Ground of his moral Perfections. And as GOD is, in the highest Degree, under the Obligations of Virtue ; so all inferior rational Beings are under the same Obligations, so far as their Knowledge and Power can extend. And such Beings can never act suitably to their rational Natures, or comply with their moral Obligations, without a constant and upright Exertion of all their Powers, according to their several Circumstances, in the Discovery of Truth, (such first as most concerns them, and so on,) and in acting agreeably to it.

LXX. *ALL particular Obligations to act virtuously are included in the general one [Prop. LXVI.] of acting agreeably to the true Na-*
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tures, &c. of Things, and are moral Duties only by Virtue of it's Force. For whatever is required of moral Agents by the Will of GOD, or by the Will of any other Being; or by the Prospect of any Happiness, or Freedom from Pain, can oblige them only as *rational* Agents, or as they lie under the Obligations of this everlasting universal Rule of Action. And whatever doth not oblige them as *rational* Agents, can be no moral Obligation at all; but mere instinctive Inclination, or absurd Force and Constraint. The Perception of Truth being that alone, which can possibly render any Agent, or Action moral. For where there is no *Truth*, or no Truth perceived, there can be no Exercise of Reason, or moral Agency.

LXXI. *VIRTUE, with Respect to it's Obligations, is a Law.* And it is the FIRST and SUPREME Law, to which all other Laws owe their Force, on which they depend, and in Virtue of which alone they oblige. [Prop. LXX.] It is an UNIVERSAL Law. The whole Creation is ruled by it: under it Men, and all rational Beings do subsist. [Nor is it fit they should subsist, or continue in Being, but as they are voluntarily ruled by it.] It is the Source and Guide of all the Actions of DEITY Himself, and on it his Throne and Government is founded. [Prop. XXIV, LXIX.] It is an UNALTERABLE and IN-
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DISPENSIBLE Law. The Repeal, Suspension, or even Relaxation of it, but for a Moment, in any Part of the Universe, cannot be conceived without a Contradiction ; [or without supposing Things to be what they really are not ; or without a Dissolution of the whole Universe. It is an ETERNAL and EVERLASTING Law.] Other Laws have had a Date ; a Time when they were enacted and became of Force. They are confined to particular Places, rest upon uncertain Foundations, may lose their Vigor, grow obsolete with Time, and become useless and neglected. None of these are true of this Law. It has no Date ; was never made or enacted ; is prior to all Things, and governs all Things ; is self-originated, and self-valid ; stands on immoveable Foundations, and can never lose it's Vigor and Usefulness ; but must ever retain them, without the Possibility of Diminution or Abatement. It is coeval with Eternity ; as unalterable as necessary, everlasting Truth ; as independent as the Existence of God ; and as sacred, venerable and awful as His Nature and Perfections. *Price's Review*, Chap. VI. P. 189.

LXXII. *VIRTUE*, with Respect to the Practice of it, is the Perfection of rational Beings. Because it is the only right Manner of applying and using the Powers of Reason,
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in all Cases and Circumstances, according to their true Nature, and for the highest Ends and Purposes for which they could be given. For they could be given for no higher End, than to understand the Truth, and to act agreeably to it. Which must include all good Dispositions of Mind ; all that can render a moral Agent useful to others, and happy in himself : that is to say, all that is perfective of his Nature, both absolutely and relatively. By Virtue, one Man is a God to another. By this noblest of all Principles we move regularly and honorably in every Sphere of Action ; and behave properly under all Events in every Relation, State and Condition. And by the Habits of Virtue, gained in this present World, we are duely qualified to act *for ever* properly and worthily ; and in a manner perfectly agreeable to any new enlarged or exalted Circumstances, Ingagements or Relations in any future State of Existence, and in any other Part of God's Creation, to which we can be raised, or removed ; seeing the Laws and Obligations of Virtue are the same every where, throughout the whole Universe, and throughout all Eternity.

LXXIII. *VIRTUE is the only Mean of rendering moral Agents the proper Objects of Approbation, Esteem, Encouragement and Reward. Mere Existence, though attended with the highest Powers, being simply the*
Work

Work and Gift of GOD, and no ways the Merit of the Agent, who possesses them, cannot recommend that Agent to Esteem, or render him praise-worthy or rewardable. Most evidently, it is only his own proper Use and Application of his Being and Powers, that can give him a Character of Worth, and intitle him to Honor and Reward.

LXXIV. COROL. *It seems agreeable to the Reason of Things, that moral Agents, after their Creation, should be, for some Time, in a State of Trial or Discipline ; to exercise, prove and season their Virtue in it's proper Habits, (which cannot be forced upon them. Prop. LV.) in order to render them the qualified Objects of the Divine Approbation, and the proper Subjects of Honor and Exaltation. And this may well be supposed to be the present Case of Mankind.*

LXXV. OUR Maker, by giving us rational Powers, hath necessarily laid us under all moral Obligations, and, consequently, hath made us the Subjects of moral Government, as far as those Powers extend, By Prop. XL, LXIX.

LXXVI. COROL. *The promoting of Virtue among moral Agents is the End and Design of all the Divine Constitutions and Dispensations relating to such Agents. For God has plainly*

ly declared, in the Frame of their Nature, that he has made them for the Purposes of Virtue; and as this must be the principal End, because it is the Perfection, of their Being, [Prop. LXXII.] God will certainly, and constantly act agreeably to these Truths, in all his Dealings, Appointments and Transactions with moral Agents, according as their several Cases and Circumstances do require. [Prop. XXIV.]

LXXVII. *REASON*, or *Understanding*, is the only Faculty in the human Constitution, which can perceive moral Obligations. Because this is the only Faculty that can discern Truth, or the true Natures, Circumstances and Relations of Things; [Prop. XXXVIII.] and, consequently, the Obligations, which necessarily result from them. [Prop. XXII.]

LXXVIII. *WITHOUT* a right and faithful Use of Understanding, Virtue cannot be practised. Because Virtue is acting conformably to the Natures of Things; and therefore those must be known according to our Capacity; otherwise, it is not possible we should act agreeably to them. [Prop. XV.]

LXXIX. *THEREFORE*, the rational Powers, or Intelligence, of every finite moral Agent, is the first, or nearest, Object of that right Action, or virtuous Conduct, to which
such

such Agent is obliged. [Prop. XVI.] Which mental Powers he is necessarily obliged, or it will always be reasonable for him, to cultivate and improve, according to their Extent and Capacity, and the Opportunities he enjoys, by the general Law, which obliges him to treat or use every Thing according to it's true Nature. For as it is the true Nature and Use of the Eye to discern Objects; and the Eye, which is always wilfully closed, is, in Effect, destroyed: so it is the true Nature and Use of Intelligence, or Reason, to consider and compare Objects, their Properties and Relations; otherwise, it is, in Effect, destroyed, and is no Understanding, or understands nothing as it should do. And so the Conduct of the moral Agent, who neglects or perverts his Understanding, is vicious, by the foregoing Proposition. Therefore, the primary Object of Virtue is our own Faculties, and a right Use of them. And the Obligation to a right Use of them necessarily arises from our being possessed of them. [Prop. LXXV.] That is to say, while we are possessed of them, it will always be reasonable to use them rightly, or according to their true Nature: and can never be otherwise. Prop. XII.

LXXX. *THE Extent of our intellectual Capacities, and the Means and Opportunities we enjoy of improving and exerting them,*
must

must be taken into the Account of our Virtue, and of the Degree of our Obligations. For Capacity, Means and Opportunity are Truths relating to our Being and Circumstances, as much as any other whatever; and therefore, ought to be considered as being what they truly are. No Man can be obliged to Impossibilities; or it cannot be reasonably expected, that he should do no more than is in his Power. No Beings can lie under further Obligations than their Powers extend to. Prop. LXIV.

LXXXI. COROL. *The Differences of Capacities, Educations, Opportunities, and various other Circumstances of our Existence, make the Trial, or moral State, of different Men different and peculiar. Which Difference of moral State is a Secret to our narrow Minds, and can be known to God alone.*

LXXXII. GOD, *who is infinite in Power and Wisdom, can enlarge our Faculties, discover new Objects of Attention and Regard; or supply new, and more effectual Means of Improvement, as he pleases. And it is agreeable to His Character, as He is our Maker and Father, that He should afford His Offspring such Means of Improvement.*

LXXXIII. *IF at any Time the great GOD hath been pleased, or shall think fit,*
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to enlarge our Faculties, or to discover any new Object of our Regard and Attention, besides and beyond what appears to us in the present Constitution of Things ; or to supply any new or more effectual Means of improving our Minds, we are obliged, by the necessary and eternal Law of Truth, [Prop. LXVI.] to regard and to use them according to what they are, as much as we are obliged to regard and improve those, which He hath already discovered and supplied in the present Constitution of Things. This Rule must hold good to all Eternity. If GOD discovers a new Benefactor, our Gratitude immediately, and necessarily becomes due to that Benefactor. If he displays new Instances of Goodness and Favor, our Obligations to Love and Thankfulness necessarily result. If he furnishes new Motives to Duty and Virtue, we are bound by the eternal and immutable Laws of Truth, to admit their Force upon our Minds. Objects and Favors may be new ; but Obligations cannot be of a new Sort, but must be of the same Kind with any other we are at any Time under. The Sphere of Duty may be enlarged ; but Duty, or right Action must, in it's own Nature, ever remain unaltered.

LXXXIV. *A NEW, or different Relation or Circumstance, according to the eternal and immutable Law of Truth, constitutes new and different Duties, with their proper Obligations.*

gations *. When a Person is advanced to Magistracy, his Obligations and Duties, as a Magistrate, are different from those of private Life. As a private Person, he was obliged indeed to be concerned for, and to wish well to, the whole Community; but was not invested with Power and Authority to guard, or to effect it's Welfare. But as a Magistrate, invested with Power and Authority to guard the Safety, and promote the Welfare of the Whole, he is obliged by the true Nature of the Relation, in which he stands to the Community, not only to wish it well, but to consider by what Means his new Power is to be employed, that the Prosperity of the Community may be best secured and promoted, and to act accordingly. As a private Person he is obliged, as all private Persons are, by the Laws of Truth, to make favorable Allowances for the Infirmities, Mistakes and Passions of Mankind; and so to be of a forbearing Temper, and ready to forgive Wrongs and Injuries. But as a Magistrate, the State of the Community must determine him in dispensing Pardons and Punishments, according as they affect the State of the Public. Thus the Injury,
which

* Lines and Figures have different Properties and Proportions, as they are differently drawn and situated. So the moral Qualifications of Actions vary, as their Objects and Ends, Cases and Circumstances alter. [*Price.*]

founded upon the eternal and immutable Relations and Proportions of Numbers, Lines and Figures. So moral Truth is eternal and unalterable, whether our Perceptions of Objects are true Representations of their intimate Natures, or Substances, or not. It is enough that we faithfully endeavor to perceive and understand Objects, according to the Extent of those Capacities which God hath given us ; and that we act agreeably to the Ideas and Definitions of them, as they appear to the human Understanding, whatever they are in themselves. For we can be obliged to argue and reason from the Natures, &c. of Things, and to form our Actions upon them, only as they appear to us, and are faithfully apprehended and perceived by us. Thus we shall act agreeably to the Truth of our Capacities, and the Truth of Things, so far as we can know them. However, in the abstract Ideas, and Definitions of Things, as they appear to us, and in their several Relations, Proportions and Circumstances, we cannot be deceived, unless we wilfully deceive ourselves.

LXXXVII. *THE Imperfections, which attend our Nature, do not affect the Rule of Duty.* Seeing all Beings are necessarily obliged to the Practice of Virtue, according to their Degree of Reason, or moral Capacity,

city, be it more or less ; but no further. For no Beings can lie under any Obligations, beyond the Extent of their Powers or Capacities. Prop. LXXX.

LXXXVIII. *ALL the Obligations and Duty of inferior Beings, or imperfect Agents, are necessarily comprehended within the Limits of their true and faithful Endeavors.* In GOD, his perfect Nature excludes all Need of Endeavors. In all imperfect Beings, faithful Endeavors must be the Perfection of their Virtue : because their Powers and Capacities reach no further.

LXXXIX. *THEREFORE, in Man, the Virtue relating to his PRINCIPLES, or the Persuasion of his Mind concerning Duty, cannot be measured either by the Quantity, or Exactness of his Knowledge, or the Truth and Rightness of his Opinions, but only by his real and sincere Love of Truth, and faithful Enquiry after it, (according to his Capacity, Opportunities and Circumstances,) upon which those Principles or Persuasions are embraced.* Because this is all that he can do to gain true Knowledge and right Opinions, how much soever he may happen to be wrong in either. [LXXX] His Opinions are morally right, and have all the Merit of true ones, should they happen to be really wrong. So little Reason is there for persecuting those that

really are ; and still less for persecuting those who *we only think* are, in the Wrong.

XC. *THE Virtue relating to a Man's BEHAVIOUR must be measured by the constant, sincere, uniform Endeavor, with which he conforms to Conscience, or the Dictates of his own Mind, according to his Powers, Assistances and Opposition.* The actual sincere Love of Truth is the only virtuous *Principle* in Man ; and sincere Obedience to Conscience, or the Sentiments and Persuasions, of our Minds, is the only virtuous *Practice*. These two last Propositions constitute *Integrity*. It is truly and absolutely right that a Person should do, what the Reason of his Mind, though perhaps unhappily, but not wilfully, mistaken, requires of him : or what, according to his best Judgment, he is persuaded is the Will of God. If he neglects this, he becomes necessarily and justly the Object of his own Dislike, and forfeits all Pretensions to Virtue and Integrity. [*Price.*]

XCI. *THIS lays the Foundation of a Distinction of Virtue into abstract and absolute ; practical and relative.* The first denotes what an Action is in *it self* and *absolutely*, independently of the Sense of the Agent, and what, if he judged truly, he would judge he ought to do. *Practical* Virtue has a necessary Relation to, and Dependence upon,
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the Sense and Opinion of the *Agent* concerning his Actions. It signifies what he ought to do, upon Supposition of his having such and such Sentiments of Things. A moral Agent may be [honestly] mistaken ; but what in the Sincerity of his Heart he thinks he ought to do, that he ought to do, and would be justly blameable, if he omitted to do, though contradictory to what, in the former Sense, is his Duty, [but which he doth not see to be his Duty.] A Magistrate, upon the best Evidence he can procure, may, according to his own Conscience, adjudge an Estate to one Person, which according to real Right belongs to another. Not that an Action, in this Case, is right and wrong at the same Time ; but it is right or wrong in different Respects and Senses. [*Price.*]

XCII. *TEMPTATION, or Trial, doth not lessen the general Obligation to Virtue ; though, under some Circumstances, it may alleviate Guilt.* Cases of extreme Danger are put ; in Reference to which it is queried, Whether we may not extricate our selves by violating the Truth, without transgressing the Laws of Virtue ? The Answer is, By no Means. The Laws of Truth are of eternal and unalterable Obligation, by Prop. XXII, and cannot, in themselves, and therefore ought not, in Practice, to give Way to, or to be set aside by Hope, Shame, Fear, or

any other Passion. The greatest Loss we can sustain is that of Life. Life, by the rightful and primary Tenure, we hold, only under God and Truth ; and therefore, should be willing to retain it no longer than God pleases ; or than we can keep it without violating Truth. To lose it in the Cause of Truth, is to lose it honorably. And the Reparation of the Loss, in that Case, may securely be left to the Honor of the Supreme Governor. Besides ; to say we may violate the Truth, in some Cases of Danger, is to establish a Rule, whereby we may be allowed to violate it, in all other Cases of Danger ; which will open a wide Door to all Immorality, where Pleasure and Pain, Profit and Loss are concerned. But if Pain, Dread, Terror, or any Affection of the Mind, are so great as to overpower Reason, moral Agency, in such Cases, is destroyed ; nor can we be accountable for what is done or said, under an Influence, which is irresistible, and overbearing. But such Cases happen but seldom.

XCIH. *MORAL Obligations cannot, in their own Nature, interfere, or be opposite.* For they are all founded in Truth ; and one Truth cannot interfere with, or be contrary to, another, by Prop. XXIX. No Obligation can set aside, or annul another ; but both must subsist together ; though imperfect

fect Beings may not be able to attend to both at once.

XCIV. *BUT there may be Degrees of Obligation, as there may be more Truths, or Reasons, obliging to Duty, in one Case than another.* It is true, and reasonable, that I should be kindly affected to all Men, and be ready to do any Man a good Office. But there are more Truths and Reasons obliging me, and therefore I am under greater Degrees of Obligation, to be kindly affected, and to do good Offices to those that are nearest to me in Life. But in this Case, general and particular Obligations do not interfere, so as to be opposite, or contradictory. Only as the particular Obligations require my immediate and first Attention, I may not have Power, or Opportunity, to answer the general Obligations. Which doth not prove the Nullity of those Obligations; but the Imperfection of my Nature. They are still in Force, whenever I have Power and Opportunity to answer them; though the Obligation be suspended, while I want Power and Opportunity, by Prop. LXXXVII. and so may be considered as not obliging at that particular Time.

XCV. *ALL Virtue is necessarily private, or the Result of every Person's private Judgment, and cannot be the Subject of any Authority*

ity whatever, any further than that Authority is judged to be reasonable, (as in martial Affairs, or the ordering of Children,) by Prop. XII, XXXVI. It is directly contrary to Reason to act by the Command of another, 'till it appears to me to be reasonable to do so. Thus my Reason and private Judgment become the Rule, which examines and judges the Right and Truth of Authority ; to which I am obliged to submit, not simply because it is Authority ; but because it is just and true Authority. But as the great God can command nothing that is wrong, by Prop. XXIV, [and therefore it is not merely His Will, but Truth and Right that oblige us to obey Him,] our Examination and judging of what He commands, cannot be, as in the Case of fallible Men, whether what He commands may not be wrong ; but to discover the Truth and Rightness of what He commands ; (for so it will certainly be found, if we judge truly ;) or whether it be indeed His Commandment, or not. This establishes a Right in every Man to judge for himself.

XCVI. VIRTUE, or moral Action, as it is Action, can in no Sense, or Respect, be necessary ; but must be necessarily and essentially free, by Prop. XLVI. Nor can any Being be capable of it any farther than such Being is an Agent, or is free, by Prop. LV.
 XCVII,

XCVII. *BUT though Virtue is essentially the Effect of free Choice, yet the great GOD can abundantly assist our virtuous Choices and Endeavors, without interfering with our Freedom, or Agency. As by proposing Motives, weakning the Impressions of Sense and Passion, throwing more Light into the Mind, comforting the Heart, strengthening virtuous Desires, Endeavors and Resolutions.*

XCVIII. *SUCH Powers as may be abused are essential to moral Agents. Because they are Agents, and, as such, free to act, or not to act: to act this Way, or the contrary, by Prop. XLV, XLVI. All mere sensible, or animal Agents, do invariably act according to the respective Laws of their Natures, and obey, if not under the Constraint of Violence, the immediate Sensations they are under. Moral Agents can disobey the Laws of their Natures; and therefore such Powers, as may be abused, are essential to such Beings. A virtuous Person must necessarily have a Power of being vicious, otherwise, he could not be virtuous. For then he would be necessarily virtuous; which is absurd, by Prop. LV.*

XCIX. *MORAL Agents are the only Beings that can resist the Will of GOD. Not the*

the *absolute* Will of God, or what *He* himself determines to do. To *this Will*, moral Agents, as all other Parts of the Creation, are naturally and necessarily subject. But it is the *preceptive* Will of God, which moral Agents can resist, or His Will commanding what *they* are to do. For what He wills them to do, or wills to be their Duty, must of Necessity be in *their* Power, or subject to their Agency; and consequently, must depend on them alone, with Respect to their Obedience. For if they cannot but obey, or must necessarily obey, it is very plain, they do not obey at all; but are compelled by some, either internal or external Force; which destroys the very Essence of Obedience. Prop. LV.

C. VIRTUE, or *Action* morally right, cannot consist in any naturally good Disposition, Temper or Inclination, any further than such Disposition, or Temper, is actually approved of, and voluntarily encouraged and cultivated in the Mind, by Prop. LXII. But good Dispositions, which are moral Habits, or the Effect of repeted morally good Actions, of Attention, Care, Culture of the Mind, and the constant, persevering Practice of Virtue; such good Dispositions are virtuous. But what is originally implanted in our Nature cannot be our Virtue; because it cannot be our Action.

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CI. *ACTION* is essential to a virtuous Character. No Being can be accounted good or virtuous, but only so far as it performs morally good Actions, either *internally*, in the Mind or Thoughts; or, so far as it hath Power and Opportunity, in external Practice. For a mere Capacity of Virtue, is no more Virtue, than a Capacity of Action is Action. Nor is an Intention of acting, Virtue, which Intention, when it is in the Agent's Power, is not put in Execution.

CII. *IN Morality, the End and Means are the same.** That is to say, no moral Agent should propose any End, but only so far as it is virtuous; nor pursue it by any Means, but only such as are virtuous. All other Ends are distinct from the Means of obtaining them: but in Morality both End and Means coincide, and are the same; there being no Way to Virtue, but the Practice of Virtue; nor any End to be thereby proposed, but the Reasonableness of our Actions, and their Conformity to Truth. For to propose any other End is absurd. Because thereby the Action ceaseth to be virtuous, or reasonable, so far as that other End, which is not virtuous, or reasonable, *alone* is regarded. To propose
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* *Stoici dicebant, Honestatem propter se expetendam.* Cicero de Offic. Lib. I. Cap. II. Virtue is necessarily obligatory on all rational Beings, for it's own Sake alone, exclusively of what may be gained by it, or any Consequences that may flow from it. Prop. IX, X.

the greatest Happiness to our selves or others, is the most important End we can pursue. But to pursue this End, without perceiving or conforming to the rational Obligation so to do, cannot be virtuous ; but must only be what all mere sensible and animal Beings, void of any moral Capacity, and without any Perception of moral Obligation, are capable of, and constantly comply with, according to the Natures of their several Instincts, or Sensations. No Instance of Happiness is to be intended, but what is reasonable ; nor to be pursued by any Means, but such as are reasonable. If we propose the Favor of God or Men as an End, it must be pursued as a reasonable End, by reasonable Action, or our Conduct cannot be virtuous. For what ever is not a reasonable Object of Pursuit cannot be pursued reasonably, or virtuously. A moral Agent is bound to pursue Happiness, Honor or Glory : but in no other Way than what is suitable to the Nature of Things ; that is to say, by acting in Conformity to the true Nature of the Object, his own Nature, and all other Circumstances. Therefore the *mere* Pursuit of Happiness is not Virtue ; but the pursuing it *reasonably* is Virtue. Therefore, even in seeking Happiness, the End is still being virtuous, or approving our selves to our own Minds, as having done Right in the pursuit of Happiness ; not merely as having gained Happiness or Enjoyment, but as having gained it as a reasonable

able and virtuous End, by reasonable and virtuous Means. A Brute might applaud it self as having gained what is pleasing to it's Appetite. The being simply pleased with any Degree of Enjoyment, hath, in it self, no Connection with Virtue, or right moral Action ; the proper Pleasure of Virtue reaching no farther than being satisfied or pleased in having acted virtuously. Any other Pleasure must be of the same Kind with animal Pleasures, *viz.* only the Perception, or Feeling, of some Sense. Vicious Persons pursue Happiness, Pleasure or Enjoyment, as well as the virtuous. Therefore, with the mere Pursuit of Enjoyment, neither Virtue nor Vice are in any Connection, being a mere natural, instinctive Object or Pursuit. The Difference is, the virtuous do not make Pleasure or Happiness the primary and principal End of their Pursuit, but the being virtuous, or acting virtuously : the vicious make Pleasure and Happiness the primary and principal End of their Pursuit, without any Regard to being virtuous.

CIII. *THOSE Actions are indifferent, with Respect to which there is no Room for the Exercise of Reason, or a Regard to Truth ; if any such Actions can be. But no Action can be indifferent, where there is any Place for the Exercise of Reason.*

CIV. *AS*

CIV. *AS the Circumstances of Actions are very different, and their Degrees of Importance are infinite ; so the moral Obligations in many Actions are very small and few.*

CV. *ALL merely animal, material and insensible Things can reasonably be regarded in our Actions, only according to their Uses and proper Applications to rational and sensible Beings.* To this Rule must be reduced the extirpating of Weeds, the pruning, and felling of Trees, the destroying of noxious Creatures, and the taking away the Lives of others for Food ; which is indeed contrary to their several Natures, considered simply as living and growing ; but agreeable to their Natures, or to the Truth, as they are either hurtful, or subservient to human Life. For as they are not capable of using themselves, or of directing their Being, or Faculties, to rational Ends, they are to be used and directed by rational Agents according to their Natures, and Capacities of Usefulness, or of the contrary.

CVI. *IT is immoral and contrary to the true Natures of the Things, to destroy without Reason, any material Things, that may be useful to rational or sensible Beings.*

CVII. *IT*

CVII. *IT is immoral unnecessarily to take away Life from, or to give unnecessary Pain to, any sensible Being whatever.*

C H A P. VI.

Of Happiness.

CVIII. DEFIN. **H**APPINESS is agreeable Sensations, or pleasant Feelings of Mind, or Body, in a Freedom from all that may give Uneasiness. Happiness may otherwise be called Pleasure or Enjoyment ; and the Means of producing or obtaining Happiness, may be called Good, Profit, Advantage, Interest.

CIX. *BY the Definition Happiness is essentially different from Virtue. For,*

CX. I. *Happiness is a pleasing Sensation ; Virtue is right Action. But to feel what is pleasant, and to do what is right, are in Nature quite distinct. Mere Animals can perceive Happiness, or pleasing Sensations, and are capable of pursuing them, without being able at all to distinguish or practise moral Good or Evil. And therefore, a Sense or Capacity of Happiness is not necessarily connected*

nedged with, much less can it constitute, moral Agency.

CXI. 2. *HAPPINESS is a Manner or State of Existence ; Virtue is a Manner of Action.* Every Manner or State of Existence is the Effect of Power not our own, producing it independently of our Choice ; as whether we shall be in Health or Sickness, in Peace or Trouble, in a chearful Temper or in low Spirits, and sad Dejection of Mind. But Virtue is the Choice of our own Wills, and is always absolutely in our own Power. We cannot at all alter the State and Manner of our Being, as originally constituted : nor can we always, and perhaps but in few Instances, alter the State and Manner of our Being, as it may afterwards accidentally be attended with Pain and Suffering. But whatever is the Manner and State of our Being, we can always be virtuous.

CXII. 3. *HAPPINESS is the Gift, Operation, Constitution or Appointment of GOD alone, and can be neither more nor less, than what he willeth, or effecteth ; whether it ariseth from the proper Exercise of those Powers he hath given to any Being, or be reserved to his wise and equitable Distribution in some future Time.* For the Divine Power is absolute over all Beings, Minds and Bodies without Exception. And as he can
put

put them into any State or Mode of Being as he pleaseth ; so it is not possible they should, either by their own Actions, or otherwise, be in any State of Being, but what he effects or hath constituted. For as no Creature can give it self Existence ; so neither can it give it self any particular State of Existence ; but must necessarily take it's Existence, as capable of Pleasure, or obnoxious to Pain, just as God hath allotted, and appointed ; who, if he had pleased, could have made those Objects or Actions the Occasion of the greatest Pleasure, which are now the Occasion of the greatest Pain or Uneasiness. But Virtue is the Act and Choice of our own Mind, independent of the Will and Pleasure of God ; who cannot alter it's Nature, or change a virtuous Action into it's contrary ; as he can turn the Sensations, which are now pleasurable, into such as are painful, and *vice versa*.

CXIII. 4. *NO Being can be happy without a Power, Force or Strength, sufficient to secure to it self whatever is agreeable and pleasing to it's Nature, and renders it's Circumstances perfectly easy on the one Hand ; and on the other to guard and preserve itself in perfect Safety from all Annoyance, or from whatever may occasion Pain, Sorrow, Solitude and Dejection of Mind. Happiness, or pleasing Sensations of Body or Mind, is ne-*

cessarily the Effect of *Power*, and subject to it. But rational Beings may be virtuous in sole *Agency*, or in a Capacity of choosing to do what is right.

CXIV. 5. *SUFFERING and Sorrow, the Opposites to Happiness, may be the most proper Means of gaining the highest Degree of Happiness : but Falshood and Vice, the Opposites of Virtue, can in no Instance, or Respect, be any Means of gaining Virtue, or of rendering those, who practise them, virtuous.*

CXV. 6. *MORAL Obligations and Happiness may interfere ; but moral Obligations never do, nor can, interfere with each other.* Prop. XV. XCIII. Nothing is more common than for the Practice of Virtue to be attended with Suffering in one Kind or other.

CXVI. 7. *HAPPINESS is of a various, uncertain Nature ; and depends upon the Apprehensions, Opinions, Tempers, Dispositions, and even Imaginations of Men. He is not happy, who doth not think himself so ; or, who is not in a Temper for relishing what otherwise would give Happiness or Enjoyment. But Virtue is of a certain and unalterable Nature, and has no Dependence upon Temper, Conceit or Opinion.*

CXVII.

CXVII. VIRTUE *therefore and Happiness are in their several Natures essentially different and distinct*; quite unconnected and independent, as much as Sensation or Feeling, the Effect of mere Power or Force, is distinct from, and unconnected with, right Action, or the free Choice of a moral Agent; or as much as a good Character is different from, and unconnected with, the enjoying of a good Estate, or the relishing of pleasant Food.

CXVIII. HAPPINESS, *or the Enjoyment of Good, cannot be the proper Foundation, primary Reason, or catholic Rule of Virtue*; though, *in a rational Way, it may be a Motive to it.* It cannot be the primary Reason, or Rule of Virtue; because Virtue is, in it's own Nature, distinct, and may exist separate from Happiness, and consequently, may be where Happiness is not. Our Sensations may be sometimes agreeable, sometimes disagreeable: but under all such Changes, the Obligations of Virtue are not affected, but remain unalterably the same, standing upon an eternal and immutable Basis. Further; Happiness, Enjoyment or Good, cannot be the absolute and universal Rule of Duty; because these are not *always, and in every Instance*, a proper Rule of Duty, or Object of Pursuit. For the Rule of Duty in many Cases will lead us to Suffering, and oblige

us to refuse and pay no Regard to Enjoyment, Advantage, Good or Happiness. But that Rule, which is not *universal*, at all Times and in all Cases the same, cannot be the Foundation of Virtue : because such a Rule would be uncertain and various ; and so, sometimes it's contrary would be the Rule. But Truth is immutable, always, and in all Cases, the invariable Rule of Conduct. Prop. XX, LXVIII. Therefore, the Truth is the only proper Foundation of Virtue.

CXIX. HAPPINESS *is not the necessary Consequence of Virtue.* Because, in many Cases, Suffering attends Virtue, or is the Consequence of it. But *Necessity* is a Principle, or Reason, which subsists equally, and universally, at all Times, every where, and in all Cases. Therefore, if Happiness were *necessarily* connected with Virtue, the virtuous could not but be *always* actually happy, and every where, and in all Cases, possess Enjoyment, in Proportion to the Degree of their Virtue. But this is contrary to certain Fact and Experience ; which is Evidence as clear and strong as the most certain Experiment in natural Philosophy, and absolutely overthrows the Notion, that Happiness is the *necessary* Consequence of Virtue. For, if but one single rightlin'd Triangle could at any Time be found, in any Part of the Universe, whose
three

three Angles added together could be demonstrated to be more or less than two Right-Angles, that single Instance would overthrow the *necessary* and *universal* Truth of this Proposition, *That in every rightlin'd Triangle the three Angles taken together are equal to two Right-Angles.* In like Manner, if there can be found but one Instance, (and many Instances may be found) of distressed, suffering Virtue, it must absolutely destroy the Truth of this Proposition, *That Happiness is the necessary Consequence of Virtue.* The most virtuous Persons may be in Pain, Trouble, Sorrow, and sad unaccountable Dejection of Spirit and Horror of Mind. Nor can their Virtue free them from their Sufferings. This can be done only by some Power, Force or Strength, by Prop. CXIII. But Virtue, (especially considered as already performed or practised,) is not Power, Force or Strength. Virtue is Action, but not an Agent; and it's Action, as such, terminates wholly in it self, or is it's own End. The proper End of Virtue, or right Action, being to act rightly, to regulate our Behavior, or to constitute a virtuous Character. Virtue, in it self, extends no further, by Prop. CII. Virtue, indeed, in any Cases of Distress, where it is remembered and attended unto, (for it may possibly be forgot, or not attended unto, and then certainly it can give no Relief) will supply comfortable, alleviating Considerations. But in such Cases, when it

is remembered and attended unto, the only Reflection, relating to Virtue, is, that we have acted virtuously, that we have done no Wrong. All the rest, even all the Comfort, is an Inference from this; *namely*, therefore we have not deserved those Sufferings: or therefore some just Power will interpose to deliver us from them. Consolation is not the immediate Effect of Virtue, which is no Cause, no Agent, but the Inference of our Minds drawn from the Virtue to which we are conscious; which Inference may, or, through Excess of Anguish, may not, be made: if not, then no Consolation will follow from Virtue. Thus a Person under a painful Disorder, if he reflects, may have some Comfort, from this Consideration, that *it cannot hold long*. Now, it is not the Disorder, in it self, that effects this Comfort; but the Reflection or Inference of the Mind, that it must soon be over. Virtue, when we have practised it, is no Power, no Agent, but only a Notion, or abstract Idea, in our Minds, which can effect nothing, but as it is remembered, reflected upon, and Inferences are drawn from it. Indeed *We*, ourselves, are Agents, and have Power; but not Power to make ourselves or others happy, by guarding against all possible Evils, or securing the Possession and Enjoyment of *all*, or any Good suitable to our Nature in this World; much less, in a future State. God only hath Power to do this.

CXX. BUT

CXX. *BUT though Virtue is not the necessary Cause of Happiness, yet it is necessarily the only Ground of Happiness; as it is true, that Virtue is the highest Perfection of rational Nature, which is the most excellent Kind of Being; [LXXII.] and as Virtue is the only Object of Reward, Encouragement, Protection and Honor. [LXXIII.] This results from the intrinsic Excellence of Virtue, as it is right Action. And this must lay an Obligation upon, or make it fit and reasonable for, the great God, who alone hath Power to confer Happiness; to make Virtue finally happy. Though, (as he must be obliged to give Happiness in a rational Way,) He may have preponderating Reasons for a while, or in a State of Trial, to suspend Happiness, or to permit the Sufferings even of virtuous Beings; as, if for no other Reason, to prove, exercise and raise their Virtue, to it's proper Degree of Strength and habitual Perfection. To this Obligation we are sure God, the most perfect Intelligence, doth, in every State of Things, constantly and invariably attend; and therefore we are as sure, that the virtuous will be happy, as we are of the Effects of any of the divine moral Perfections. And even in the present State of Things, God hath supplied us with Facts and Experience suffi-*

cient to shew, that Virtue will be finally happy.*

CXXI. COROL. 1. *There can be no other Way of being happy, but in the Practice of Virtue.* Because we can in no other Way attain to the Perfection of our Nature, procure Satisfaction, Peace and Comfort of Mind, or gain the Favor of GOD. Happiness is necessarily connected with no Power we have, and cannot be procured without the Will of GOD ; therefore the Practice of Virtue, which must be his Will, is the only Way, and the infallible Way, to obtain it.

CXXII. COROL. 2. *The Scriptures are true in directing us to a Dependence upon GOD alone, and to seek unto him for Happiness ; for Success, Safety, Peace, and a comfortable Enjoyment of ourselves, in an absolute Trust in his Goodness, Submission to his Will, and in the Use of such Means only as he hath appointed for*

* THE Obligation to the Practice of Virtue, in a State of Things, where it frequently exposes the Virtuous to Suffering and Misery, would be an absurd Constitution, if there was not a moral Governor of the World, upon whom virtuous Beings might depend for final Happiness, in the Practice of Virtue. For either all virtuous Beings should be insensible to Pleasure and Pain ; or Pleasure should always, in all Circumstances, attend Virtue, neither of which is true in Fact ; or else, (which is the Truth,) there must be a moral Governor of the Universe. *Enquiry concerning Virtue, &c.*

for promoting our present or future well-being.

CXXIII. COROL. 3. *Happiness, or Self-Enjoyment, is the * natural Effect of Virtue*; that is to say, by the Will and Constitution of GOD: even as Light is the natural Effect of the Sun, or Nourishment the natural Effect of eating. The Sun, by the general Constitution of it's Nature, would shine upon us always, did not GOD appoint Clouds, and the Interposition of the Earth, to intercept it's Rays: and Food would always nourish the Body, had not GOD, in certain Cases, and for wise Ends, ordained, that Diseases should interrupt it's natural Efficacy, even when it is used according to the strictest Rules of Temperance. So Virtue would naturally, that is, by the general Constitution of GOD, produce pleasing, and Vice displeasing Sensations, unless GOD is pleased by his Power to interpose in either Case. For the human Mind, as all dependent Beings, is necessarily subject to the absolute Power of GOD. He can make what Impressions He pleases upon our Spirits, to depress or to raise them, to suspend their Powers or Reflections, to abate their Vigor, and, in short, totally to annihilate

* IN this, and the next Proposition, I use the Word *natural*, in Opposition to *necessary*: meaning thereby, the mere Will of GOD, or what he has been pleased to appoint.

hilate them. The Mind cannot possibly be in any State of Pleasure or Uneasiness, but what God is pleased to effect, constitute or permit. Thus the very best of Men may, unaccountably, be under very sad Dejections of Mind, without the least Comfort from their Integrity ; while vicious Persons may be jovial and merry, without any present Interruption from a Sense of Guilt. Both which Cases must be by the Permission of God, or his Impressions upon the Mind ; and both in much Wisdom adapted to a State of Trial, where the Virtue of good Men is to be variously exercised ; and where, if the natural Consequences of Vice were always to take Place, bad Men would not be free, but forced to be virtuous : which is a Contradiction, by Prop. XCVI, LV.

By the Way, I cannot see how Beings, that have contracted Guilt, perhaps in a heinous Degree, can, though pardoned, be happy in a future State, unless the Divine Power, by it's Impressions, suspends or suppresses Reflections upon their Guilt, or takes off the Force of Truth, by taking off the Attention of their Minds to it. Otherwise, were they always attentive to it, the Truth relating to every Instance and Degree of Guilt would be the same, and their Sense of it the same to all Eternity, by Prop. XXVII. No Truth can be destroyed ; but the Attention
and

and Affections of the Mind may be altered, by the Impressions of Almighty Power.

CXXIV. *THE Happiness or Pleasures, which naturally attend the Practice of Virtue, are the greatest we are capable of enjoying in this imperfect State.* Because they are the Result of the rightest and best Use of our noblest Powers. Which Use of our Powers, when the free and just Exercise of them is not hindered, clouded or suspended, by mental Disorders, excessive Pains, or everwhelming Sorrows, must, therefore, when reflected upon, yield a Pleasure, Satisfaction or Comfort, in the Consciousness of our Integrity, the inward Approbation of our own Actions; and a Sense of the Divine Favor, as much superior to any other Pleasure we are capable of, as the Mind, and it's Perceptions, is superior to the Body, and the Sensations thereof. Without this Pleasure, a Man may be in Misery, with all other Ingredients of Happiness; and with it, the meanest Circumstances are not only comfortable, but infinitely preferable to all the criminal Enjoyments of Affluence.

CXXV. *HAPPINESS, as all other Ends, is only to be pursued, when it is reasonable, or, in Consistence with, all other Truth and Obligation.* For Truth and Obligation are not alterable by any Circumstances or Prospects

pects of Pleasure and Pain, by Prop. XX, XXII. Where Truth and Reason require certain Actions, no Interest of Pleasure or Pain can alter the Obligation ; since in that Case, a less Pleasure, or even Pain, is to be chosen, not indeed for it's own Sake, which is absurd, but for the Sake of Virtue, Reason or Truth, which moral and rational Beings are obliged to observe. Therefore,

CXXVI. *HAPPINESS is only an End subordinate to Truth and Reason.* By moral Agents, or reasonable Beings, not Pleasure or Pain, but Reasonableness, the acting reasonably, or according to the Obligations of Truth, is, in the Nature of Things, first to be considered, and is therefore the final End, by Prop. CII. And after *that*, the Consideration of any other End, and of Happiness, in particular, may take Place ; which, therefore, can only be a subordinate End. He acts against Reason, who doth not make it his first and principal Intention and Aim to act reasonably. This is the general Law of his Nature, and ought to be the primary View and End of all his Actions.

CXXVII. *HAPPINESS, as the sole End of Action, can never be pursued reasonably, or according to Truth, except when Happiness alone constitutes the Obligation to pursue it.* For if there is in any Case, any other
Obligation

Obligation different from Happiness, or inconsistent with it, such Obligation is negative to the Pursuit of Happiness, or forbids the Pursuit of it. Because it must then be inconsistent with some Reason or Truth ; that is, it must be unreasonable to pursue it. For Happiness is not reasonable, but when it hath all Reason and Truth on it's Side, or not against it. All Happiness, or Pleasure, of any Kind, must necessarily give Way to Reason ; and no more is to be endeavored after, than is consistent with Duty. Therefore, Happiness can never be the Object of any moral Consideration, but when Actions relate to that alone.

CXXVIII. *HAPPINESS is a proper Motive to Virtue. Or, to practise Virtue in Hopes of either present Comfort, or future Happiness, is to practise it with Regard to it's natural Consequence ; [Prop. CXXIII.] and therefore is perfectly consistent with the Love of Truth, and with the true Nature of Virtue. Or thus ; to pursue Happiness by the Practice of Virtue, is to pursue it in the only right, justifiable, and effectual Method.* Because then we pursue Happiness in Subordination to every moral Obligation ; [Prop. CXXV, CXXVI.] or we expect Happiness as the Reward of nothing but Virtue ; and as the Gift of God, who can love and favor us, only so far as we are virtuous. It is recommending our selves
to

to the Approbation and Esteem of the most pure and perfect moral Agent, by being virtuous as he is virtuous ; who, for that Reason, will infallibly make us finally happy. [Prop. CXX.] Indeed, so far as Happiness *alone* is regarded, and so far as we are determined to pursue it, in any Way, right or wrong, our Regard to Happiness is vicious. But to choose, and resolve to pursue it in no other Way than what is quite honorable, that is to say, in the Practice of Virtue and Truth, and to refuse it in any other Way, is to act in Consistence with the most perfect Kind, and highest Degree of Virtue.

CXXIX. *HAPPINESS, Pleasure, Enjoyment, are, in their own Nature, preferable to Misery, Pain and Suffering.* And therefore, where no other moral Obligation interferes, lay every Person under a moral Obligation to pursue the one, and avoid the other, by all Means in his Power. Because thus he acts according to their true Nature, and the Truth of his own Nature, which requires it of him. To act otherwise, would be to misbehave towards himself, or to treat himself differently from what he is, and to neglect one of the most important Concernments of Life.

CXXX. *FOR the same Reason, it is our Duty, when no other Obligation interferes, to*
make

make all other Beings happy, as far as our Power extends, and as far as they stand in Need of our Assistance. That is to say, it is our Duty to make others happy, as far as it is reasonable; or so far as Things and Circumstances do in Reason and Truth require. Otherwise, we shall misbehave towards them, by treating them differently from what their Nature, Relations to us, and Circumstances really are. Not to say, that by refusing our good Offices, we shall preclude our selves from all Right to their Assistance, when we stand in Need of it. The Desire and Study to promote universal Happiness, or public Good, seems to be the most excellent Kind of Virtue, as it is the most conspicuous and comprehensive.

CXXXI. *THE Happiness of the whole Universe, or of any Part of it, is not a reasonable End merely for it's own Sake, and in all Circumstances, without any Regard to the Reasonableness of it.* For then it would be impossible to see any Instance of Pain, Suffering or Misery, in the Universe, or in any Part of it, considering the infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness of God; who must see the Reasonableness of the supposed universal Happiness, must be disposed to will it, and who cannot possibly want Power in any Instance to effect it. Which demonstrates, that it is not always right and reasonable to give Pleasure;
but

but that our own Happiness, and that of others is to be endeavored and promoted, only so far as it is reasonable, or agreeable to Truth. Prop. CXXVI.

CXXXII. *IN Cases, where it is reasonable to pursue Happiness, it is always reasonable to choose the greatest; and of Pains the least.*

C H A P. VII.

Of the Will of GOD.

CXXXIII. *THE Will of GOD is necessarily under the Obligations of Truth and Right; and is as much more certainly and immutably determined by them, than the Will of any inferior rational Being, as He is infinitely more perfect than any of his Creatures. For, observe, His Obligation to do right, is the Result of His own infinite, eternal, and all-perfect Understanding, and of nothing besides. [Prop. XXIV.]*

CXXXIV. *COROL. GOD cannot alter any eternal and necessary Obligations that moral Agents lie under; since those do equally, or, in Proportion to His infinite Perfection, more strongly, bind GOD Himself. But in all other Cases, He may dispose of His own, that*

that is to say, of the whole Universe, and all the Being, Life, Power and Property in it, in what Manner He pleases, without any Wrong to his Creatures ; for He is absolute Proprietor of all.

CXXXV. *HE that acteth according to Truth, or the true Natures of Things, to the best of his Knowledge, must act agreeably to the Will of GOD, and cannot but be approved by Him.* Obedience to Truth and Reason, is Obedience to GOD.* The Laws of our Nature are the surest Indication of the Will of God.

CXXXVI. *IN Virtue, of the general and eternal Law of Truth, the Will of GOD is of the highest Authority, and absolutely indisputable.* For He is infinitely excellent, the sole Fountain of Reason and Wisdom, our Maker and Proprietor, from whom we have received our ALL, and upon whom we entirely depend ; † for whom, therefore, we

* *Ἀγὼν δεῖν περὶ θεοῦ καὶ θεῶν ταῦτον ἐστὶ.* Hieroc. Carm. Pythag.

† It is these render him the proper Object of our eternal Homage, constitute his Right of Government, vest him with universal and just Dominion, and make it the supreme Duty of all reasonable Beings to obey, please and honor him, in all they think or do: [*Price.*] for his Nature, and Relations to them, make this their most reasonable Duty.

ought to have the highest Esteem and Regard, and to whose Commands we are bound to yield the most implicit Obedience ; as we know that the divine Will is always under the Direction of the most perfect Reason ; and therefore is always most perfectly wise, good and righteous. But the Will, or Command of God, can possibly lay no moral Obligation on a rational Being, contrary to, or separate from, this first, great and immutable Law, any more than the Nature of Truth, or the eternal Differences of Things, or the Rule of everlasting Righteousness, can be altered by the Will of God ; who, indeed, hath no Will to alter them.

CXXXVII. *GOD cannot but be the Judge of all moral Actions and Agents.* Seeing he cannot but know all Beings, and Actions, in all their Natures and Circumstances ; and cannot but approve or dislike their Actions, according to the true Natures and Circumstances of them.

CXXXVIII. *IT is very fit and becoming the universal moral Judge, to interpose in our World, and to declare positively, as he shall judge expedient, his present Approbation of Virtue, and Dislike of Vice ; and his Resolution finally to reward the one, and to punish the other.* For as he necessarily judgeth, and approveth or condemneth, all moral Agents,
according

according to their Behavior, and yet, doth not, at present, think proper to interpose in every State of their Existence, in order to shew (by apparent Displays of his Power rewarding and punishing) this his Approbation or Dislike, which might be inconsistent with our Circumstances, as we are now in a State of Probation. And as this Favor and Displeasure of GOD are most of all obscure, (though ever certain in the Judgment of right Reason,) in the Imperfection and Corruption of any State ; and as our State is manifestly very imperfect and corrupt, and the visible Distinction between the Virtuous and Vicious in it is very small, and generally not discernible. Add to this, the Darknes and Difficulty that must needs attend so imperfect and corrupt a State, and the Discouragement and Fear, perhaps Despair, that must often affect the Hearts of weak and frail Beings, in such a State ; especially under a Sense of Guilt, (and who can say he is free ?) and the Consideration of the kind Regards and Goodwill of GOD, to all his Creatures ; and it will not be incredible, but highly probable, that the great Governor and Judge of the World should supply these Defects, and support such Beings, by some REVELED positive Assurance of his Regard and Favor, Anger and just Displeasure, according to the Behavior of his Creatures.

CXXXIX. REVELATION cannot contradict, much less annul, the Obligations of Natural Religion, by Prop. XXIII, XXVII. Revelation may lay new Obligations, by Prop. LXXXIII. but only in perfect Agreement with the eternal Laws of Truth, which can never be vacated.

CXL. THE greatest Evidence of the Truth of any Revelation, must be it's Agreement with natural Religion, or with our moral Obligations, and it's Suitableness to the true Circumstances of our State. For so it cannot be wrong, but must be right in it self. Nothing can be more certainly the Will of GOD, than what Reason requires : and no Revelation can be more worthy of GOD, than such a one as the true State of Things requires.

C H A P. VIII.

*Of the human Constitution, with Respect to
Morality.*

CXLI. *MAN* hath several other Powers besides Reason and Agency. Namely, sundry Instincts, Passions, Affections and Appetites.

CXLII. *ALL*

CXLII. *ALL Instincts and Passions in our Constitution are inferior to Reason, and subject to it's Dominion, by Prop. XXXIX.*

CXLIII. *INSTINCTS and Passions are implanted in our Nature for wise and good Purposes. This is sufficiently ascertained by the Wisdom and Goodness of God.*

CXLIV. *SOME of them are Auxiliaries to Reason, to excite it to Action ; and so are subservient to the Purposes of Virtue.*

CXLV. *THE Passions are to be moderated and directed, as the Natures and Degrees of them, and the Circumstances of Things do require.*

CXLVI. *CONSCIENCE is not a distinct Faculty in the human Soul ; but the Judgment of our Minds concerning our own Actions ; or it is our Apprehensions of Right and Wrong, either directing, or reflecting upon, our own Conduct. It differs from Reason and Understanding no otherwise, than as it is Reason or Understanding, exercised in forming a Judgment upon our own Actions, as morally right or wrong, according to that Knowledge and Conceptions of Things, which we have attained.*

CXLVII.

CXLVII. *CONSCIENCE leads us according to the Judgment we form of Things.*

CXLVIII. *IN order to our being rightly directed by Conscience, it is our Duty sincerely, diligently and impartially, laying aside all Prejudice, and guarding against all Deception, to make faithful Enquiry after the Truth, and to gain the clearest Knowledge of it we are able, by Prop. XV, XVI, LXXIX.*

CXLIX. *THUS endeavouring to gain the clearest Knowledge of Truth and Right, we are obliged to perform those Actions, which our Conscience, or Judgment, apprehends to be our Duty in any Case or Circumstance. For thus we answer the peculiar Obligations, to which we are subject, in a sincere Use of our own Capacities, Opportunities, Means and Advantages, whether they afford us more or less Light, by Prop. LXXXVII, LXXXVIII. It is all we have, and all we can have at present.*

F I N I S.





